THE APOCALYPTIC VISION
in
THE POETRY OF PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

by

Ross Greig Woodman

University of Toronto

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ROSS GREIG WOODMAN

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THE APOCALYPTIC VISION IN THE POETRY OF PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

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BIOGRAPHICAL

1922 --Born, Port Williams, Nova Scotia
1945 --B. A., University of British Columbia
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THESIS

The Apocalyptic Vision in the Poetry of Percy Bysshe Shelley

(Abstract)

Shelley was essentially a metaphysical poet. Poetry, he says, has its source in "the invisible nature of man", which the inspired poet reveals in symbolic form. Man's "invisible nature", Shelley calls the "ideal prototype"; its symbolic form, he calls the "antitype". Poetry, then, is the antitype corresponding to the prototype within man, the revelation of his true nature. It is this revelation that constitutes the apocalyptic vision.

The faculty in man by means of which he "strips the veil of familiarity from the world, and lays bare the naked and sleeping beauty which is the spirit of its form", is, according to Shelley, the imagination. By "veil of familiarity", Shelley means the world of appearances in the Platonic sense; by "naked and sleeping beauty", he means the archetypal Forms, again in the Platonic sense. Unlike Plato, however, Shelley conceives of the world of the Forms as existing in man; it is, in essence, man's "invisible nature". Thus Shelley interprets Plato's Demi-urge in the Timaeus as the archetypal image of the creative imagination. Plato's cosmos becomes for Shelley the antitype; the world of the Forms serving as the model upon which the Demi-urge constructs the universe becomes the prototype. The realm of Necessity ("chance or errant cause"), which, so far as possible, the Demi-urge wins over by persuasion to what is best, becomes the "accident of surrounding impressions", which, relative to the imaginative order that the poet creates, is "a chaos".

In contrast to the imagination, reason is limited by Shelley to the "veil of familiarity". While he allows to reason the constructive role of imposing an order upon the world of the senses, he argues that this rational order (which following Godwin and the philosophes, he calls Necessity, the immutable order of cause and effect) is simply the reflection of an imaginative order. Reason analyses what the imagination creates, thereby confirming on the level of consciousness an imaginative act which is, according to Shelley, "beyond and above consciousness".

Shelley, therefore, is not rejecting the role of reason; his concern, rather, is to subordinate it to the imagination. So long as men recognize that reason is to imagination "as the body to the spirit, as the shadow to the substance", the ultimate authority of the imagination ("that imperial faculty", he calls it) is not endangered. In his own day, however, Shelley believed that the imagination was not being given

its proper place in the hierarchy of man's faculties. This belief was based upon personal experience. Between 1810 and 1812, Shelley considered himself a rationalist, and, as such, rejected the imagination, considering it the instrument of human delusion, expressive of man's ignorance of the laws of Nature. His reversal of this position (between 1812 and 1815) coincides with his emergence as a poet. In A Defence of Poetry, he says: "The human mind could never, except by the intervention of these excitements [imaginative forms of art] have been awakened to the invention of the grosser sciences, and that application of analytical reasoning to the aberrations of society, which is now attempted to exalt over the direct expression of the inventive and creative faculty itself."

The effect of this effort to exalt reason over the imagination, he says, is the enslavement of man to the tyranny of a purely external order. It is man's enslavement to Necessity, which he describes in Queen Mab. While man's awareness of Necessity as the immutable law of cause and effect governing the motions of the universe may enlarge the limits of his empire over the external world, it also circumscribes his internal world, so that man. "having enslaved the elements, remains himself a slave."

The release of man's "invisible nature" from the tyranny of an external world is the result of the creative activity of the poet. The transfiguration of Necessity into the antitype of the prototype within man was the imaginative task that occupied Shelley between 1812 and 1819. The record of this Herculean undertaking is presented in Queen Mab, Alastor, The Revolt of Islam and Prometheus Unbound. Not until he had completed the last act of Prometheus Unbound was his goal reached; the fourth act is a paean to his own imaginative conquest.

As apocalyptic visions, both Queen Mab and The Revolt of Islam are failures. The weakness of Queen Mab (1812) lies in Shelley's inability to establish an organic relationship between himself, as poet, and the universe, as the material source upon which the poet imposes an imaginative form. Still under the influence of a mechanistic philosophy that assumes the existence of an external world which is independent of the subject who perceives it, he could not yet affirm his mature conviction that the spirit, in all objects which it views, views only its own creations. What is evident in the poem is a psychic struggle in Shelley to find the ultimate ground of all knowledge within himself. Implicit at least in the poem is the identification of the various forms of tyranny which he so heartily condemns with the mechanistic universe of D'Holbach which he describes. He had not yet arrived at the realization of his poetic maturity; namely, that the vision of a mechanistic universe at once fixed and immutable is simply the perspective of the fallen self. He had not yet worked out his own metaphysic.

In The Revolt of Islam, Shelley presents the temporary victory of the forces of evil over the forces of good, culminating in the death of Laon and Cythna, but followed by their entrance into a world where they enjoy eternal bliss. What the poem actually reveals, however, is Shelley's inability to define the nature of evil and thereby deal with it. In the introductory Canto, he presents the conflict of good and evil as a constantly renewed struggle between a serpent and an eagle. The limitations of Shelley's conception of this struggle can best be understood by comparing it with the struggle between Prometheus and Jupiter in Prometheus Unbound. In this latter poem, Jupiter is the symbol of man's restricted consciousness, i.e., consciousness unredeemed by imagination. Jupiter is simply another form of Prometheus bound to a precipice; both are symbols of the arrested imagination. The wounded serpent which falls into the sea in The Revolt of Islam, therefore, is another form of the eagle. Both are symbols of the arrested imagination. Shelley is not yet sufficiently aware

of the nature of his own developing vision, of his own psychic powers, to explore all the dimensions of his apocalypse.

The same failure to grasp the completely internal nature of his vision is present in Alastor (1815). The youth in the poem goes forth in search of the antitype corresponding to the prototype within himself, hoping to find the antitype in the real world of flesh and blood. Failing to find this living embodiment of his own prototype, he sinks to an untimely grave. The poem records in the account of the poet's failure a failure of the creative imagination.

Indeed, the symbol of the wounded serpent used in The Revolt of Islam is a key to an understanding of the imaginative failure of Alastor and of Queen Mab.

Prometheus Unbound is the realized form of Shelley's apocalyptic vision. The love-union of Asia and Prometheus redeems, as it were, the poet's failure in Alastor. The last act presents a vision of the transfigured universe revolving in an ecstasy of love; the revolution set in motion by Laon and Cythna, but incomplete within The Revolt of Islam, is here brought to its victorious fulfilment.

> The painted veil, by those who were, called life,
> Which mimicked, as with colours idly spread,
> All men believed or hoped, is torn aside;
> The loathsome mask has fallen, the Man remains, -
> Sceptreless, free, uncircumscribed, - but man:
> Equal, unclassed, tribeless, and nationless,
> Exempt from awe, worship, degree, the King
> Over himself; just, gentle, wise; - but man.

Shelley, however, imposes a limitation upon the vision of Prometheus Unbound. Although the "painted veil" is "torn aside", man yet remains man, and therefore not free

> From chance, and death, and mutability,
> The clogs of that which else might oversoar
> The loftiest star of unascended heaven,
> Pinnacled dim in the intense inane.

Only death can release man from these limitations of earthly existence, and in his last two great poems, Adonais and The Triumph of Life, he addresses himself to that ultimate dimension of Reality beyond "the dome of many-coloured glass". These last two poems, therefore, cannot be completely explained in terms of the task which occupied Shelley between 1812 and 1819. It is here necessary to examine a dimension of Shelley's thought which, while present in each one of the major poems up to 1819, was not therein brought into focus. These two poems reveal on Shelley's part a final severance with eighteenth-century radicalism and a preoccupation with what he calls the "One" or "the white radiance of Eternity". They do not, however, reveal a break with the esoteric tradition within which he wrote. That tradition, which led by what may be termed a metaphysical dialectic to the creation of these last two great poems, provides the archetypal pattern of Shelley's entire career as a poet.

In the dedication stanzas to Mary Shelley in The Revolt of Islam, Shelley tells of gathering "knowledge from forbidden mines of lore" from which he "wrought linked armour for [his] soul, before/ It might walk forth to war among mankind". The knowledge to which he refers was derived, as the mythological framework of the poem

makes clear, from John Frank Newton, whose knowledge of Oriental mythology was impressive. On the basis of his understanding of the Hindu Zodiac, Newton worked out an interpretation of all classical myth. And this interpretation Shelley associated with the imaginative mode of perception. What Newton offered him in the summer of 1812 was an archetypal myth in terms of which all visionary literature revealed a single archetypal vision. This conception Shelley expresses in his Defence of Poetry, in which he says that all mythopoeic literature is a single cyclic poem. As a poet, he set out to grasp the nature of the monomyth that provides all visionary literature with its archetypal unity, in order that he himself might express it for his own day From 1812 to 1819, he constructed the vision upon which he believed all civilization rests.

As his articles in the Monthly Review during 1812 show, Newton had a fanatical interest in Orphic theology, which he considered largely Hindu in origin. An understanding of the mysterious rites associated with Orphism at Eleusis, he believed, was the true talisman by means of which to bring about the new golden age. Shelley was immediately impressed; in Queen Mab, he suggests that the golden age will emerge when all men submit to the Orphic injunction against animal diet. However preposterous this conclusion may appear, one fact is evident: Shelley's mythical formulation of his apocalyptic vision was destined to have its foundation in Orphism. As a mythopoeic poet, Shelley presents in his vision the Orphic scheme of salvation. And this scheme he considered the imaginative (i.e., the mythical) form of his philosophical radicalism.

Viewed in mythical terms, therefore, the prototype, which, says Shelley, is the "divinity in man", is Dionysus, the god of whom Orpheus was the prophet. He is the archetype of unfallen man. According to the Orphic theology, this archetypal form is imprisoned in flesh (Shelley's "veil of familiarity") from which it longs to escape so that it may once more re-assume its proper form. The image of that proper form is, for Shelley, the antitype which the imagination creates. Thus, in the Preface to The Cenci, he says that the imagination is "as the immortal God which should assume flesh for the redemption of mortal passion." The poet, as poet, is the god of Orphism who sacrifices himself for the redemption of man. He is, as Shelley describes himself in Adonais, the Dionysian figure who bears the wounds of Christ

Like Christ, whom Shelley converts into a Dionysian hero, the poet, having assumed flesh to perform his redemptive role, must ultimately return to the "abode where the Eternal are". This return is, for Shelley, the meaning of Christ's ascension: the return of the Son to the Father is the reunion of the incarnate with his spiritual form. In Orphic theology, it is reunion with the One. Inherent in the archetypal pattern of Orphism, therefore, is the final extinction of the self and, as in Adonais, the re-absorption into "the white radiance of Eternity".

Within this archetypal framework, Shelley's apocalyptic vision evolved, culminating as it does in the vision of the poet's spirit in Adonais penetrating beyond all worlds and satiating "a void circumference". In The Triumph of Life, he examines the grisly spectacle of those poets (among others) who failed to trample "the dome of many-coloured glass" and merge with the "white radiance of Eternity". Shelley thinks of the "sacred few" (Christ and Socrates) who, having "touched the world with living flame" fled back like eagles to their "native noon". In Adonais, Keats's death, better than his own best piece of poetry, pointed the way: "No more let life divide what death can join together." These two poems, therefore, must be understood in the light of the archetypal pattern of Orphism, a pattern more implicit than explicit in his earlier poems.

By relating Shelley's imaginative undertaking in poetry to the archetypal pattern of Orphism, it is possible, therefore, to arrive at the three distinct phases of Shelley's poetic career. The first phase presents him as a rationalist in which the poet's prototype (the divinity in man) is imprisoned behind a "veil of familiarity". The second phase presents the gradual release of the prototype through the shaping power of imagination until it is fully revealed in the creation of the antitype. The final phase presents the poet, his redemptive mission fulfilled, merging, as it were, with his own creation and thereby being re-absorbed into the One. Queen Mab, a transitional poem, best reveals the first phase. Alastor, The Revolt of Islam and Prometheus Unbound reveal the development of the second phase. Adonais and The Triumph of Life reveal the final phase.

GRADUATE STUDIES

Major Subject:

English Literature	--Professors H. N. Frye, A. S. P. Woodhouse, F. E. L. Priestley

Minor Subjects:

English Language	--Professor W. H. Clawson
Philosophy	--Professor F. H. Anderson

INTRODUCTION

Shelley was essentially a metaphysical poet. Poetry, he says, has its source in "the invisible nature of man"[1] which the poet in a state of hieromania reveals in symbolic form. Man's "invisible nature", Shelley calls the "prototype";[2] its symbolic form, he calls the "antitype".[3] Poetry, then, is the antitype of the prototype within man, the revelation of his true nature. It is this revelation that constitutes the apocalyptic vision.

The faculty in man by means of which he "strips the veil of familiarity from the world, and lays bare the naked and sleeping beauty, which is the spirit of its forms"[4] is , according to Shelley, the imagination. By "veil of familiarity", Shelley means the world of appearances in the Platonic sense; by "the naked and sleeping beauty", he means the archetypal Forms, again in the Platonic sense. Unlike Plato, however, Shelley conceives of the world of Forms as existing within man; it is, in essence, man's "invisible nature". Thus Shelley interprets Plato's Demi-urge in the <u>Timaeus</u> as the archetypal image of the creative imagination. Plato's cosmos becomes for Shelley the antitype; the world of the Forms serving as the model upon which the cosmos is constructed becomes the prototype. The

realm of Necessity, which, so far as possible, the Demi-urge wins over by persuasion to what is best, becomes the "accident of surrounding impressions",[5] which, relative to the imaginative order that the poet creates, is "a chaos".[6]

In contrast to the imagination, reason is limited by Shelley to the "veil of familiarity". While he allows to reason the constructive role of imposing an order upon the world of the senses, he argues that this rational order, which, following Godwin and the philosophes, he calls Necessity, is simply the reflection of an imaginative order. Reason analyses what the imagination creates, thereby confirming on the level of consciousness an imaginative act which is, according to Shelley, "beyond and above consciousness".[7]

Shelley, therefore, is not rejecting the role of reason; his concern, rather, is to subordinate it to the imagination. So long as men recognize that reason is to imagination "as the body to the spirit, as the shadow to the substance",[8] the ultimate authority of the imagination ("that imperial faculty",[9] he calls it) is not endangered. In his own day, however, Shelley believed that the imagination was not being given its proper place in the hierarchy of man's faculties. And this belief was based upon personal experience. Between 1810 and 1812, Shelley considered himself a rationalist, and, as such, rejected the imagination, considering it a form of human delusion expressing man's

ignorance of the laws of Nature. His reversal of this position coincides with his emergence as a poet. In A Defense of Poetry, he says:

> The human mind could never, except by the intervention of these excitements [imaginative forms of art] have been awakened to the invention of the grosser sciences, and that application of analytical reasoning to the aberrations of society, which is now attempted to exalt over the direct expression of the inventive and creative faculty itself.[10]

The effect of this effort to exalt reason over the imagination, he says, is the enslavement of man to the tyranny of a purely external order. It is man's enslavement to Necessity which he describes in Queen Mab. While man's awareness of Necessity as the immutable law of cause and effect governing the motions of the universe may enlarge the limits of his empire over the external world, it also circumscribes his internal world, so that man "having enslaved the elements, remains himself a slave."[11]

The release of man's "invisible nature" from the tyranny of an "external world" is the result of the creative activity of the poet. The transfiguration of Necessity into the antitype of the prototype within man was the imaginative task that occupied Shelley between 1812 and 1819. The record of this Herculean undertaking is "writ large" in Queen Mab, Alastor, The Revolt of Islam and Prometheus Unbound. Not until he had completed the last act of Prometheus Unbound was his goal reached. The fourth act of Prometheus Unbound is a paean to his own imaginative conquest.

It is not possible, however, to explain Shelley's last two great poems entirely in the light of the task which occupied him between 1812 and 1819. To understand Adonais and The Triumph of Life it is necessary to understand a dimension of Shelley's thought which, while present in each one of his major poems up to 1819, was never brought into focus until he composed these last two poems. Here he severed his roots in eighteenth-century radicalism to find his final abode in Nirvana. When, however, Shelley's whole career as a poet is viewed in terms of its mythopoeic nature, it becomes evident that this final phase, so radically opposed to the spirit of the Enlightenment, was not a break with, but a fulfilment of, the esoteric tradition within which he wrote.

In the dedication stanzas to Mary Shelley in The Revolt of Islam he tells of gathering "knowledge from forbidden mines of lore" (38) from which he "wrought linked armour for my soul, before/ It might walk forth to war among mankind" (39-40). The knowledge to which he refers was derived, as the poem makes evident, from his friendship with John Frank Newton, whose knowledge of Oriental mythology was impressive. On the basis of his understanding of the Hindu Zodiac he worked out an interpretation of all classical myth. And this interpretation Shelley associated with the imaginative mode of perception. What Newton offered him in the summer of 1812 was an archetypal myth in terms of

which all the visionary literature of the world revealed a single apocalyptic vision. This conception Shelley expresses in his Defense of Poetry, in which he says that all mythopoeic literature is, in reality, a single cyclic poem. As a poet, he set out to grasp the nature of the monomyth that provides all visionary literature with its archetypal unity in order that he himself might re-express it for his own day. From 1812 to 1819 he constructed the vision upon which he believed all civilization rests.

As his articles in the Monthly Review during 1812 show, Newton had a fanatical interest in Orphic theology, which he considered largely Hindu in origin. An understanding of the mysterious rites associated with Orphism at Eleusis, he believed, was the true talisman by means of which to bring about the new golden age. Shelley was immediately impressed; in Queen Mab, he suggests that the golden age will emerge when all men submit to the Orphic injunction against animal diet. However preposterous this conclusion may appear, one fact is clear: Shelley's mythical formulation of his apocalyptic vision was destined to have its foundation in Orphism. As a mythopoeic poet, Shelley presents in his vision the Orphic scheme of salvation. And this scheme he considered the imaginative (i.e., the mythical) form of his philosophical radicalism.

Viewed in mythical terms, therefore, the prototype, which, says Shelley, is the "divinity within Man",[12] is

Dionysus, the Orphic god of which Orpheus was the prophet. He is the archetype of unfallen man. According to the Orphic theology, this archetypal form is imprisoned in flesh (Shelley's "veil of familiarity") from which it longs to escape so that it might once more re-assume its proper form. The image of that proper form is, for Shelley, the antitype which the imagination creates. Thus, in the Preface to The Cenci, he says that the imagination is "as the immortal God which should assume flesh for the redemption of mortal passion."[13] The poet, as poet, is the god of Orphism who sacrifices himself for the redemption of man. He is, as Shelley describes himself in Adonais, the Dionysian figure who bears the wounds of Christ.

Like Christ, whom Shelley converts into a Dionysian hero, the poet, having assumed flesh to perform his redemptive role, must ultimately return to the "abode where the Eternal are" (Adonais, 495). This return is, for Shelley, the meaning of Christ's ascension: the return of the Son to the Father is the re-union of the incarnate with his spiritual form. In Orphic theology, it is re-union with the One. Inherent in the archetypal pattern of Orphism, therefore, is the final extinction of the self and, as in Adonais, the re-absorption into "the white radiance of Eternity".

From the standpoint of Shelley's myth, therefore, Shelley's development reveals three distinct phases. The

first phase presents him as a rationalist in which the poet's prototype is imprisoned behind a "veil of familiarity". The second phase presents the gradual release of the prototype through the shaping spirit of imagination until it is fully revealed in the creation of its antitype. The final phase presents the poet, his redemptive mission fulfilled, merging, as it were, with his own creation and thereby becoming re-absorbed into the One. It is this final phase that comes into focus in Adonais and The Triumph of Life, for, with the completion of Prometheus Unbound, he had finished his redemptive task. Having "touched the world with living flame", he fled back like an eagle to his "native noon" (The Triumph of Life, 130-131).

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Part I

THE NATURE OF THE VISION

"This object, or its archetype, forever exists in the mind, which selects among those who resemble it, that which most resembles it; and instinctively fills up the interstices of the imperfect image, in the same manner as the imagination moulds and completes the shapes in clouds, or in the fire, into the resemblances of whatever form, animal, building, etc., happens to be present to it."

<u>A Discourse on the Manners of the Ancients</u>

Chapter I

THE DEVELOPMENT OF SHELLEY'S VIEW OF THE CREATIVE IMAGINATION

Shelley was, by nature, a man with "'a passion for reforming the world'".[1] In his early years that passion was expressed in the writing of prose pamphlets and in direct participation in the work of converting the masses to Godwin's ideas as he himself understood them. His recognition that poetry was the supreme instrument of human regeneration, the proper outlet for his own moral passion, was the discovery of his last years. In the midst of composing Prometheus Unbound, he writes to Peacock (January 24, 1819):

> At present I write little else but poetry, and little of that. My first act of Prometheus is complete, and I think you would like it. I consider poetry very subordinate to moral and political science, and if I were well, certainly I should aspire to the latter; for I conceive a great work, embodying the discoveries of the ages, and harmonising the contending creeds by which mankind have been ruled. Far from me is such an attempt, and I shall be content, by exercising my fancy, to amuse myself, and perhaps some others, and cast what weight I can into the

right scale of that balance, which the Giant of Arthegall holds.[2]

This "great work" to which he refers in his letter to Peacock is mentioned again in the Preface to Prometheus Unbound: "Should I live to accomplish what I purpose, that is, produce a systematical history of what appear to me to be the genuine elements of human society, let not the advocates of injustice and superstition flatter themselves that I should take Aeschylus rather than Plato for my model."[3] Implicit in this statement is the recognition of the superiority of moral and political science to poetry. Not until challenged by Peacock's mocking attack upon poetry in the Four Ages of Poetry did Shelley, in A Defense of Poetry, consciously reverse his position. In this last prose work, written in 1821, Shelley argues at some length the subordination of moral and political science to poetry.

The view of poetry expressed in A Defense of Poetry can be traced to Shelley's growing awareness of the importance of the creative imagination as the instrument of moral growth in man. By creative imagination, it should here be pointed out, Shelley means the faculty by which the poet transfigures the world of the senses into a vision of the Ideal. To explore the history of that growing awareness and to examine his mature insight into the nature of the creative imagination is the purpose of this chapter.

Any discussion of Shelley as a moral reformer with

faith in the imagination must begin with an examination of Godwin's Enquiry Concerning Political Justice, for in his reading and re-reading of this work Shelley first defined his own position and its influence remained a part of his thinking throughout his life.[4] Godwin's faith in human progress and perfectibility ignited Shelley's reforming zeal and quickened his imagination, although at first he was convinced that, as a disciple of Godwin, he must give up the imagination for reason. This phase of Shelley's career was, however, fortunately short lived. By 1815 he had interpreted Godwin's philosophy to satisfy the demands of his own nature. Godwin's picture of mankind, aspiring through a gradual increase of consciousness to some ultimate state approximating pure intelligence, certainly contained within it the seed of a great cyclic poem. That poem was imperfectly executed in Queen Mab and finally realized in Prometheus Unbound. When certain important modifications have been made, it may be said that Prometheus Unbound is the total form of Godwin's thought fused into an ideal unity by the shaping spirit of imagination.

The first feature of Godwin's philosophy which is significant for its influence upon Shelley is the place that Godwin gives to the human mind. He rejects Hartley's theory of vibrations because the mind, in this system, is simply the physical organ of sensation, and therefore en-

slaved by "material automatism."[5] Mind, Godwin asserts, is, in its mode of functioning, independent of matter because it has the power of reflection, the ability to stand, as it were, aside from the mechanism of perception and observe it. This power of observation is what constitutes consciousness and is to be distinguished from what Godwin calls "unconscious thought."

> By the consciousness which accompanies any thought, there seems to be something implied distinct from the thought itself. Consciousness is a sort of supplementary reflection, by which the mind not only has a thought, but adverts to its own situation, and observes that it has it. Consciousness, therefore, however nice the distinction, seems to be a second thought.[6]

To the extent that man functions as a conscious being in the sense above defined, he is a disinterested spectator and able to distinguish between his own personal and temporary good and the good of humanity, and, on the basis of his awareness of the distinction, forgo any purely selfish desire in the interests of humanity. He is, that is, capable of disinterested benevolence. And here again Godwin disagrees with the sensationalists who assert that man is selfish by nature and governed in all his actions by the pleasure-pain motive. Godwin agrees that the pleasure-pain principle is the basis of human conduct, but, unlike the sensationalists, introduces a qualitative scale of pleasures in which the direct pleasures of the senses are subordinated to the higher pleasures to be found in the

pursuit of virtue. The man, he says, who seeks the benefit of others and finds his happiness in the consciousness of their good ascends "to the highest of human pleasures, the pleasures of disinterestedness."[7]

This notion of a graduated scale of pleasures has its significance for Shelley when, in A Defense of Poetry, he raises the whole issue of the "utility"[8] of the poet as distinct from the reformer who seeks to alleviate the animal needs of his species and provide mankind with some sort of social security. The poet's rôle, he justifies on the basis of a scale of pleasures derived from Godwin, though transcending it.

Involved in the shift from the self to the universal system, which is the result of consciousness, is the imagination:

> We are able in imagination to go out of ourselves, and become impartial spectators of the system of which we are a part. We can then make an estimate of our intrinsic and absolute worth; and detect the imposition of that self-regard which would represent our own interest as of as much value as that of all the world beside. The delusion being thus sapped, we can, from time to time at least, fall back in idea into our proper post, and cultivate those views and affections which must be most familiar to the most perfect intelligence.[9]

There is in this statement the germ of Shelley's theory of the creative imagination. Poetry, as the expression of the imagination, provides a vision of the universal system and man's "proper post" within it as viewed by "the most perfect intelligence." Godwin, like Shelley, did not as-

sume that what is "most familiar to the most perfect intelligence" is what is most familiar to man in his present state. Man, at best, can only from time to time achieve such insight and that only in idea, not in fact. The whole relationship between Godwin and Shelley, as will be seen, centred around the problem of what man may ultimately be and what he, at present, is. Shelley's enthusiasm for Godwin's doctrines led him to confuse the future with the present. Before he could dedicate himself to poetry he had to work through that confusion. The resolution, however, Godwin could not provide; Shelley had to seek elsewhere, and he found it in Plato.

In contrast to the approximation of "the most perfect intelligence", Godwin describes the condition of savage torpor to which the unreflecting man is subject. Without reflection, Godwin argues, the action which is the means to a pleasurable sensation is no longer separated from the sensation itself so that the means becomes the end. The result is that the pleasure to be received no longer governs the action. In the case of the lecher or the drunkard, for example, the same course of action is pursued "long after the pains have outweighed the pleasures, and even after they confess and know this to be the real state of the case."[10] The end result is a perverted form of disinterestedness.

True disinterestedness is distinguished from this

perverted form in at least three ways. First, true disinterestedness, while not making pleasure the motive of action, has pleasure as a by-product, whereas in the perverted form the pleasure principle is neither a motive nor a by-product. Concerning the disinterested performance of duty, Godwin says:

> This pleasure and pain however, though not the authors of my determination, undoubtedly tend to perpetuate and strengthen it. Such is conspicuously the case in the present instance. The man, who vigilantly conforms his affections to the standard of justice, who loses the view of personal regards in the greater objects that engross his attention, who, from motives of benevolence, sits loose to life and all its pleasures, and is ready, without a sigh, to sacrifice them to the public good, has an uncommonly exquisite source of happiness. When he looks back, he applauds the state of his own affections; and when he looks out of himself, his sensations are refined, in proportion to the comprehensiveness of his sentiments.[11]

Secondly, true disinterestedness is always the result of an expansion of consciousness, whereas the perverted form is the result of a constriction of consciousness to the point where it is altogether lacking. Thirdly, true disinterestedness is the result of volition, whereas the other is always involuntary. Concerning this last point, Godwin says:

> An unanswerable argument for the system of disinterestedness, is contained in a proposition so obvious, as for its very plainness to be exposed to the risque of contempt, viz. that the motive of every voluntary action, consists in the view present to the mind of the agent at the time of his determination. This is an inference which immediately results from the nature of volition. Volition is an affair of foresight. "No motion is voluntary, any further than it is accompanied with intention and design, and has for its proper antecedent the apprehension of an end to be accomplished . So far as it flows in any degree from another source, it is involuntary." [12]

The difference between these two forms of disinterestedness is significant for an understanding of Shelley's theory of the creative imagination. In A Defense of Poetry, he views the function of the imagination in terms of re-creating the universe which has been blunted by the reiteration of habitual impressions. The germ of this doctrine is attributable to Godwin in his distinction between the masses in their condition of torpor and the emancipated man of benevolence. Once again, however, the realization of the poet's function as a creative agent renewing the life of the universe did not become clear to Shelley until he read Plato.

Godwin originally defines good and evil in terms of pleasure and pain. In the extremities of virtue and vice, however, the pleasure-pain principle is no longer the direct motive of action. The definition is, therefore, inadequate. A more adequate definition would be related to the expansion and contraction of consciousness: good includes the expansion of consciousness and the means by which it is procured. For Godwin, truth and consciousness are inter-related: to achieve the state of total consciousness is to attain to absolute truth. His whole mission as a moral philosopher was to set forth in the Enquiry the way to an increase of consciousness, and hence to the discovery of those immutable truths which govern the universe and should

govern the relations among men.

At the same time, however, Godwin wished to avoid the subjectivity implicit in defining good and evil in terms of pleasure and pain or an expansion and restriction of consciousness. His whole doctrine of rational progress required external and immutable standards by which that progress could be measured. Hence, he argues that the attainment of truth requires the loss of the self-regarding principle. The influence here of Plato is noted by Professor Priestley:

> From Plato, Godwin adopts a doctrine of eternal and immutable truths, existing independently of the Creator, and serving as a formal cause in the process of creation. The doctrine of eternal truths is of fundamental importance in Godwin's scheme of rational progress, since all progress demands some external standard towards which progress is made, and to which all is relative; rational progress demands as this external standard a system of absolute truths discoverable by reason. Although Godwin is impelled to rest his whole body of doctrines upon the mechanistic necessity of the "eternal chain of causes", feeling that if he allows freedom to enter at any point his confident predictions must be invalidated, the real foundation upon which his system rests is Platonic.[13]

The Platonic foundation of Godwin's scheme is important for an understanding of Shelley's later development as a poet. Shelley's acceptance of his own poetic powers was, as already suggested, the result, to a great extent, of his reading and his understanding of Plato. While the education of the poet began with Godwin, it was completed with Plato. In Plato, Shelley discovered the visionary form of Godwin's

philosophy, and that vision was apocalyptic - i.e., a revelation or unveiling of the divinity in man.

Godwin's political philosophy is erected upon the foundation of his moral philosophy. The guiding principle throughout is the freedom of the individual. By freedom, Godwin means the power of the individual to perform voluntary acts dictated by his own reason. Institutions, therefore, have a purely negative function and their existence can be justified only where the degree of consciousness necessary to voluntary action is lacking on the part of the citizenry. The greater degree of consciousness existing among the citizens, the less justification there is for political institutions. His ideal, therefore, is anarchism.

Since the abolition of political institutions must be in direct proportion to moral improvement, Godwin is insistent that the movement toward anarchism must be gradual and, because all moral improvement requires voluntary action, non-violent: this doctrine of gradualism, it may be argued, drove Shelley to find the outlet for his passion for reforming the world in poetry rather than in the more direct methods of social reform.. In poetry it was legitimate to behold the future in the present; in dealing with society directly, the indefinite duration must be taken into account. For Shelley, the poet, an indefinite duration was a symbol of futility. "There is," he writes to Godwin

(March 18, 1812), "not a completer abstraction than labouring for distant ages."[14] Such labour was like one of the punishments designed for the uninitiated in Hades: endless water-carrying in leaky vessels.

Before examining the influence of Godwin's Enquiry upon the emergence of Shelley's faith in the creative power of imagination, it is necessary to point out that, during the period in which he played an active part in the formation of Shelley's mind, Godwin did not think of Shelley primarily as a poet, nor did Shelley address him as such. Furthermore, there is evidence in Shelley's letters to Godwin to suggest that Godwin was extremely critical of Shelley's poems and that there was little agreement between them concerning the nature of poetry. Godwin disliked the expression of passion in Shelley's verse and its lack of intellectual economy. Poetry, he thought, should express that tranquillity of spirit which characterizes true disinterestedness. To all of this, Shelley replied (December II, 1817):

> Nothing can be more satisfactory to me than the interest which your admonitions express. But I think you are mistaken in some points with regard to the peculiar nature of my powers, whatever be their amount. I listened with deference and self suspicion to your censures of "Laon and Cythna;" but the productions of mine which you commend hold a very low place in my own esteem, and this reassured me, in some degree at least.[15]

Further evidence of disagreement is to be found by comparing Godwin's Of English Style, written in 1797, with Shelley's

A Defense of Poetry. In his Introduction, Godwin points out that in the present age "science and improvement of the human mind, are in a progressive state"[16] and, therefore, "the English language was never in so high a state of purity and perfection."[17] As for the past, "it has come to be vehemently suspected, that the political maxims and moral conduct of our ancestors, were not altogether so perfect as they have been represented."[18] "May it not then happen," he concludes, "that the opinion in favour of their language may prove equally hasty and unfounded?"[19] And Godwin sets out to prove that it is. Of Sidney: "to read this performance, one would think that our ancestors who admired it, had a blood that crept more feebly in their veins than we have, and that they were as yet but half awaked from the stupidity of the savage state...."[20] Of Milton: "The exuberance of his mind led him to pour out his thoughts with an impetuosity, that often swept away with it the laws of simplicity and even the rules of grammatical propriety."[21] After continuing in this spirit with examples down to the present, he suddenly concludes that the language is now "under the guidance of taste and substantial science" so that "[we] express our thoughts in precise words, directly flowing out of the subject to be treated."[22] From all of this, it is quite clear that Godwin had little sympathy with the language of the imagination. Certainly Shelley's belief

that poetry "is not subject to the control of the active powers of the mind,"[23] and that "its birth and recurrence has no necessary connection with consciousness or will"[24] would suggest some sort of chaos to Godwin. Had Shelley not held him in such high esteem as a moral philosopher and novelist, he might have included Godwin in his attack upon the literary critics in Adonais.

In spite of the evident disagreement between Shelley and Godwin concerning the nature of poetry, it is nevertheless true that Godwin, while holding him back in some respects, played a significant part in Shelley's development as a poet. Where Godwin held him back, however, Plato led him on; what finally emerges is a conception of the poet as a creator and prophet the source of whose power lies in the shaping spirit of imagination.

Shelley wrote to Stockdale from Oxford on November 19, 1810, requesting him to send a copy of Godwin's Enquiry.[25] Thereafter he re-read the work in 1811, 1812, 1814, 1816, 1817 and 1820. In 1812, to his great surprise, Shelley discovered that Godwin was still alive and, on January 3rd, wrote his first letter to him.[26] The letter is by way of introduction, and in it he assumes, in a thoroughly self-conscious manner, an attitude and terminology derived from Godwin. He excuses himself for writing to a complete stranger on the grounds that, while it is not sanctioned by custom (which

should please Godwin), it is nevertheless in the "dearest interests of mankind" that "a free communication of intellect" be carried on between them. Assuming that Godwin is "still planning the welfare of humankind" (which, in the sense that Shelley understood planning, Godwin was not), Shelley assures him that he is an eager disciple and anxious to be of help. He then proceeds to show Godwin that he is amply suited for the task: he has been the victim of human persecution from which he remained sufficiently detached not to "alter my wishes for their renovation;" he is still "ardent in the cause of philanthropy and truth", while yet remaining "dispassionate."

Godwin answered that the letter was too general and that he had, on the basis of this first letter, no sense of his young disciple as an individual. Shelley replied within a few days providing Godwin with a brief autobiography.[27] This time he is even more the Godwinite, presenting himself almost as though he were Godwin's own creation: "passive obedience was inculcated in my childhood... I was required to love... coercion obviated its own intention." He then goes on, in an apologetic tone (a tone which Shelley never entirely lost in addressing Godwin) to describe his early "passion for the wildest and most extravagant romances reflecting sentiments unrestrained by anything within me." However, he says, his reading of Godwin's <u>Enquiry</u> has put

an end to that era; he is now a "wiser and better man." He has given up the ideal world of romance: "I was no longer the votary of romance; till then I had existed in an ideal world - now I found that in this universe of ours was enough to excite the interest of the heart, enough to employ the discussion of reason; I beheld in short that I had duties to perform." What those duties were soon becomes apparent: " I am writing An inquiry into the causes of the failure of the French Revolution to benefit mankind."

The history of this unfulfilled project reveals an interesting aspect of Shelley's career and may be touched on here. The project grew in Shelley's mind until by 1819 he had constructed a comprehensive history of the genuine elements of human society.[28] While carrying this project in the back of his thought, he wrote three lengthy poems, Queen Mab, The Revolt of Islam and Prometheus Unbound, which present, in the form of poetic visions, the inner growth of that proposed work. Each of these poems he considered quite subordinate to his actual intention, excusing himself in letters for their composition by reference to his ill health. Of The Revolt of Islam, he tells Godwin (December II, 1817): "I felt the precariousness of my life, and engaged in this task resolved to leave some records of myself."[29] The rôle that death plays in the formation of Shelley's apocalyptic vision will be examined in a later

chapter ; for the moment it is important only to consider that Shelley, as a disciple of Godwin, found it necessary more than once to apologize for his poetry in this manner, while, at the same time, holding on to a project which he considered it his primary duty to fulfil.

Within a week Godwin wrote again to Shelley informing him of his "deep and earnest interest"[30] in his welfare. The form that interest took was a steady, patient effort to curb his enthusiasm for an immediate reformation of society. He ought, he tells Shelley, "to have no intolerable itch to become a teacher."[31] Shelley, in his reply (January 16, 1812)[32], shows that he was somewhat unprepared for this advice. Godwin, he says, is not only the "regulator of my mind" but also "the moderator of my enthusiasm." The first sign of uneasiness concerning Godwin's influence now enters. "Could I not", Shelley asks, "improve my own powers and diffuse truth and virtuous principles?" If others are "scattering the seeds of prejudice and selfishness" should he not, in turn, exhibit the truth" with equal elegance and depth, suffice to counteract the deleterious tendency of their purposes?" Apparently Godwin thought not. Shelley now refused to listen and, against Godwin's wishes, went to Ireland to convert the Irish to Godwin's doctrines.

The Irish campaign was the first serious crisis in

the relations between Godwin and Shelley. It came within the first month of their correspondence. The cause of the crisis was Shelley's failure to grasp the significance of Godwin's doctrine of gradualism. Professor Priestley's comment upon this doctrine is here significant:

> He [Godwin] is not so naive as to present a perfectly rational man of natural goodness unaccountably burdened with evil institutions of inexplicable origin. Good and bad are mixed.... The expected speed of progress may be roughly judged by considering how long it has taken man to develop to his present imperfect state; how long it took him to evolve language, for example. Although the process of development may be expected to gather momentum, certainly no rapid change is to be looked for. And any attempt to anticipate, to introduce a form of society for which man is not yet fitted, would be disastrous, as Godwin repeatedly points out. Everything which suggests precipitancy, more especially everything which suggests violent introduction of changes, is an anathema to Godwin.[33]

That Shelley had failed to grasp this fact is evident in his letters to Godwin. "It appears to me," Shelley writes to Godwin on March 18th,[34] "that on the publication of <u>Political Justice</u> you looked to a more rapid improvement than has taken place." Just what Shelley meant by rapidity is clear in a letter written to Godwin ten days earlier:

> But "Political Justice" was first published in 1793; nearly twenty years have elapsed since the general diffusion of its doctrines. What has followed? Have men ceased to fight? Have vice and misery vanished from the earth?[35]

Allowing a certain license to rhetorical questions, it is nevertheless evident that Shelley anticipated a more speedy emergence of the New Jerusalem.

In answer to Shelley's despondent letter in which he

confesses that the Irish campaign had failed, Godwin wrote:

> O that I could place you on the pinnacle of the ages from which these last twenty years would shrink to an invisible point. It is not after this fashion that moral causes work in the eyes of Him who looks through the vast and, allow me to add, venerable machine of human society.[36]

The "pinnacle of the ages" suggested a rather dismal prospect to Shelley at the age of twenty; however, he wrote (March 18, 1812) that he was willing to submit.

> But I submit; I shall address myself no more to the illiterate. I will look to events in which it will be impossible that I can share, and make myself the cause of an effect which will take place ages after I have mouldered in the dust; I need not observe that this resolve requires stoicism.... There is not a completer abstraction than labouring for distant ages.[37]

In A Defense of Poetry Shelley makes a distinction between two types of utility. Utility, he says, is the means of producing pleasure. There are, however, two types of pleasure: the one is universal and permanent, the other is particular and transitory. Utility, therefore, must be understood in terms of the kind of pleasure which it seeks to produce. Poets are concerned with productions that provide a pleasure that is universal and permanent, not with a pleasure that is particular and transitory. They do not, therefore, concern themselves with banishing the wants of our animal nature, or providing man with security of life, or even removing the gross superstitions to which the masses are subject. Such effort belongs to utility in the narrow sense. Toward this conception of the utility of the poet,

Shelley was now beginning to move. And Godwin was the first to show him the way. What was, in his statements to Godwin during the crisis arising out of the Irish adventure, a statement of defeat became, in A Defense of Poetry, a statement of victory. That victory was the metamorphosis of an abstraction called "distant ages" into a visionary form in which the future is an eternal present. The instrument of this metamorphosis was the creative imagination.

In tracing this shift, the contribution of Godwin to Shelley's view of the creative imagination must first be examined. The Godwin whom Shelley met in 1812 was, as Professor Priestley points out, "an 'immaterialist' and an admirer of Berkeley" who, in his conversations with Shelley would be bound "to emphasize immaterialism, the belief in a governing spirit (not personal, however) of the universe, and a rational benevolence capable of developing, with some further Platonic modification, into Shelley's principle of Intellectual Beauty."[38] There is, in other words, a natural development from Godwin's conception of rational benevolence to Platonism. That development provides an account of the emergence of Shelley's view of the creative imagination.

Rational benevolence is achieved, according to Godwin, through losing the self-regarding principle and becoming the spectator of the universal scheme. As the spectator of

this scheme man is disinterested, that is, he is able to forgo that good accruing to the self in the interest of the good of humanity. The way to this mental state lies in the exercise of reason. What Godwin does not emphasize, however, is the fact that he is using the term reason in two distinct senses which involve two separate modes of mental action. When Godwin discusses reason in terms of reflection or "second thought",[39] (which involves an analysis of the mechanism of mind itself), he is thinking of reason in the analytical or discursive sense. When, however, he speaks of reason in terms of going out of oneself and becoming the impartial spectator of the universal system, he is thinking of reason not in its discursive, but in its intuitive sense. The importance of the intuitive aspect of reason in voluntary action is significant. Voluntary acts, he argues, require foresight, advance knowledge of the outcome. In a perfectly rational being that outcome is the good of the universal system: here Godwin is speaking of intuitive reason, an immediate insight into the nature of the universe acting as the motive of action. Intuition of the whole system, therefore, is prior to the rational voluntary action of the individual.

Any analysis of what constitutes a virtuous act must be based upon a prior intuition of the whole system of the universe. Godwin, however, tends to associate this intui-

tion with "unconscious thought" because it is perception itself and not that "second thought" which is the mind's awareness of its own perception. It is this "second thought" which constitutes consciousness. In his analysis of the act of perception he makes this point clear.

> All those objects which are painted at once upon the retina of the eye, produce a joint and simultaneous impression upon the mind. But they are not immediately conceived by the mind as many, but as one: the recollection may occur that they are made up of parts, but these parts cannot be considered by us otherwise than successively. The resolution of objects into their simple elements, is an operation of science and improvement; but it is altogether foreign to our first and original conceptions. In all cases the the operations of our understanding, are rather analytical than synthetical, rather those of resolution than composition. We do not begin with the successive perception of elementary parts till we have obtained an idea of the whole; but, beginning with a whole, are capable of reducing it into its elements.[40]

While Godwin does not make the Kantian distinction between phenomena and noumena, the distinction is here implicit. Reason can deal only with phenomena; noumena are beyond its reach. At the same time, there is an intuition of noumena although this distinction does not properly belong to consciousness. This intuitive power, with which Godwin does not primarily concern himself, became for Shelley the most significant fact about the human mind. Godwin had shown that foresight is necessary to virtuous action and that foresight involved imagination - "We are able in imagination to go out of ourselves, and become the impartial spectators of the system of which we are a part."[41] As he

re-read Godwin's Enquiry, this power of imagination assumed a central position until, by 1815, he concluded that all moral progress was due to it. Imagination need not be rejected; it was the intuitive aspect of reason. In his Speculations on Morals, he says:

> Imagination or mind employed in prophetically [imaging forth] its objects is the faculty of human nature on which every gradation of its progress, nay, every, the minutest change depends. Pain or pleasure, if subtly analysed, will be found to consist entirely in prospect. The only distinction between the selfish man, and the virtuous man, is that the imagination of the former is confined within a narrow limit, whilst that of the latter embraces a comprehensive circumference. In this sense, wisdom and virtue may be said to be inseparable, and criteria of each other. Selfishness is thus the offspring of ignorance and mistake; it is the portion of unreflecting infancy, and savage solitude, or of those whom toil or evil occupations have [blunted or rendered torpid;] disinterested benevolence is the product of a cultivated imagination, and has an intimate connexion with all the arts which add ornament, or dignity, or power, or stability to the social state of man.[42]

In Godwin's system reason not only judges of the rightness of an action or the desirability of an end, but, as Professor Priestley points out, "irresistibly urges towards that action or towards the pursuit of that end."[43] It is, therefore, not only a faculty which judges but a force which compels. Reason, in this sense, includes feeling, but it is feeling divorced from its source in sensual pleasures and brought to the level of consciousness, where it expresses itself in dispassionate benevolence. It is feeling disciplined and directed by reason. The power of reason to establish the state of anarchism reflecting

in its ordered life the immutable laws of the universe rests for Godwin upon the fact that man's instinctive energies can be rendered serviceable to the pursuit of that ideal.

The re-direction of instinctive energy so that it expresses itself as rational benevolence was for Shelley, in 1815, the transformation of lust and sensuality into love of the Good. Imagination (which is the intuitive aspect of reason) is therefore identified with love. In his Speculations on Morals he describes love as "disinterestedness... united with the natural propensities."[44] "These propensities themselves ", he goes on to say, "are comparatively impotent in cases where the imagination of the pleasure to be given, as well as to be received, does not enter into the account."[45]

Out of Godwin's philosophy Shelley, therefore, evolved a doctrine of love and imagination which, while not precisely Godwinian in the emphasis that Shelley gave to it, was certainly true to his own nature. What Shelley had done was to isolate in Godwin's system what properly belongs to reason in its intuitive sense and ignore, almost entirely, the discursive. This reading of Godwin (evident in his Speculations on Morals) prepared him for his serious reading of Plato, for he interpreted Plato in the same manner as he interpreted Godwin. The dialectician he subordinated to the mythological poet.

Shelley's careful study of Plato did not begin until 1815. He had, however, studied, according to Medwin,[46] the Symposium with Dr. Lind at Eton (1804-10), and at Oxford (1810-11) he read it in Dacier's translation in addition to some of the works of Thomas Taylor, the Platonist. At Tanyrallt, in 1812, the works of Plato were sent to him. His first recorded impression of Plato is in a short verse belonging to January, 1810:

> Your writings then with old Socrates vie,
> May on the same shelf with Demosthenes lie,
> May as Junius be sharp, or as Plato be sage[47]

But this is a mere literary exercise. In 1812, however, Shelley shares the attitude of the philosophes towards Plato:[48] a mere poetic dreamer not to be taken seriously by modern philosophers. In the Notes to Queen Mab he employs the phrase "the reveries of Plato"[49] in the manner of the philosophes. By 1815, however, Shelley was no longer a materialist, and, with the view of Godwinism outlined above, he was in a position to re-evaluate Plato. The partial transfiguration of Godwinism that was going on in Shelley's mind was completed in his conversion to Platonism.

The essential Plato, from Shelley's point of view, was revealed in the Symposium. In his Introduction to his translation of the Symposium (1817) he says that this work is "the most beautiful and perfect among the works of Plato."[50] The choice at once reveals his view of Plato: he is a poet

who "exhibits the rare union of close and subtle logic, with the Pythian enthusiasm of poetry, melted by the splendour and harmony of his periods into one irresistible stream of musical impressions, which hurry the persuasions onward, as in a breathless career."[51] The peculiar genius of Plato lies less in his "close and subtle logic" than in his "Pythian enthusiasm": his intuitive, rather than discursive, power is his outstanding characteristic. And it is precisely in this respect that Plato, according to Shelley, is superior to Aristotle: "His excellence consists especially in intuition, and it is this faculty which raises him far above Aristotle, whose genius, though vivid and various, is obscure in comparison with that of Plato."[52]

It is necessary to pause here and examine briefly the significance of Shelley's view of Plato, for it provides a key to Shelley's theory of the creative imagination. Shelley, as his comments in his Introduction to the Symposium suggest, interprets Plato primarily as a mythopoeic poet, and, as a result, tends to subordinate the rational philosopher, with his emphasis upon the method of dialectic, to the poet. Plato's rejection of the myth-makers from his Republic would suggest, of course, that Shelley has given a wrong emphasis to Plato's philosophy. His answer to such a criticism would be similar to his justification of his interpretation of Milton as a poet. Paradise Lost, he says,

contains, in the figure of Satan, a direct refutation of the very system of which Milton's poem has been the chief popular support. Milton's theology is but a disguise behind which his real intention as a poet lies hidden. What is evident in the poem is a conflict between the imaginative and rational modes of mental action. As an imaginative poet, Milton was under the influence of the Muse so that what he wrote was quite independent of his conscious will. The inspired moments in the poem were "dictated".

Plato's rejection of the myth-makers, he would argue, shows a similar conflict between the imaginative and rational modes of mental action. It reflects an effort on Plato's part to subordinate his own creative faculty to reason. In reality, however, this attempt is simply the disguise behind which the real Plato lies hidden. What Shelley therefore thought he was doing was unveiling the eternal form of Plato's philosophy, revealing, that is, the apocalyptic vision behind the rational mask.

Cassirer, whose interpretation of Plato follows the more traditional approach, argues in <u>The Myth of the State</u> that there is in Plato's philosophy a deliberate rejection of <u>mythos</u> for <u>logos</u>; he was concerned, as a philosopher, to substitute a rational <u>Weltanschauung</u> for the mythical one of the poets, prophets and soothsayers. Shelley, however, following the Neo-Platonists, reverses this whole direction

in Plato's thought: logos is subordinated to mythos. His interpretation, therefore, is essentially esoteric.

The world of Ideas, which is quite independent of man in Plato's philosophy, is, for Shelley, the revelation of man's "invisible nature". Imagination, far from being limited to the sense-world (as in Plato), is the faculty by which man perceives the Forms. He identifies imagination with Plato's intuitive reason. Thus, he sees in Plato's Demi-urge in the Timaeus, not the archetypal image of Reason (which is subordinate to imagination) but the archetypal image of man's creative faculty. Nowhere in his philosophy does Plato assert that intuitive reason and imagination can be identified in this way. Imagination is twice-removed from Reality because it is limited to the sensible world.

In the discussion of Shelley's interpretation of Plato, therefore, it must be borne in mind that Shelley's view is not being presented as the correct one. Since the purpose of this study is to present, rather than refute, the nature of Shelley's apocalyptic vision, no attempt will be made to point out the errors in Shelley's imaginative perception. Shelley concentrates upon the Orphic myths in Plato's philosophy and concludes that he is an Orphic poet. It is this view of Plato out of which he constructed both his theory of poetry and his own apocalyptic vision.

Through the exercise of reason, Godwin had taught,

man is capable of going out of himself and becoming the observer of the universal scheme. On the basis of this observation, he is able, in his relations with his fellow men, to conduct himself in a benevolent manner, preferring the good of his species to any good applicable merely to himself. Godwin here assumes the existence of a universal system existing independently of the mind, but of which man is, in some sense, intuitively aware, for it is the criterion of benevolence. In terms of this doctrine of Godwin's, Shelley developed his view of the imagination and love. However, in 1815, there were still difficulties involved. How could one be sure, for example, that this universal system of which Godwin spoke was objectively real and not simply a projection? Shelley was well read in the skeptical tradition of English philosophy.[53] He had read, for example, Hume's account of causation, and in the Notes to Queen Mab he had this to say about Godwin's doctrine of Necessity: "But the only idea we can form of causation is a constant conjunction of similar objects, and the consequent inference of one from the other."[54] And the same psychological account of causation is present in Godwin's Enquiry. Necessity, therefore, is an inference based upon the recurrence of certain observations; that it is objectively true is impossible to prove. How deeply Shelley was concerned with this problem which Hume's, as well as Godwin's, philosophy presents

can be seen in Alastor. Here Shelley describes the poet who seeks some objective confirmation of that sublime knowledge which consists of all that is wise or beautiful in the world of the poet, the philosopher and the lover. He cannot, however, find it in reality. The philosophical question underlying Alastor is whether or not there is anything objectively real that answers to man's intuition. And it is a central problem for Shelley because upon the answer to it depends the whole relationship between imagination and truth.

The answer to this ultimate question for the poet Shelley found not in his reading of Godwin, but in Plato. It is for this reason that it may be said that Shelley's gradual transfiguration of Godwinism was completed by Plato. In the Symposium, Socrates defines what he means by Love by telling the gathering what Diotima, the prophetess, has taught him. It is impossible, he says, for human beings to have any real knowledge of the divine world because, between the human and the divine, there is an unbridgeable gap not only in degree but in kind. This being the case, the only possibility of communication with the divine must be through an intervention, not on the part of man, but on the part of the divine nature. This intervention is what is meant by Love. Here is Shelley's translation of the passage:

'What, then,' I said, 'is Love a mortal?' - 'By no means.' - 'But what, then?' - 'Like those things which I have before

instanced, he is neither mortal nor immortal, but something intermediate.' - 'What is that, O Diotima?' - 'A great Daemon, Socrates; and every thing daemonical holds an intermediate place between what is divine and what is mortal.'

'What is his power and nature?' I inquired. - 'He interprets and makes a communication between divine and human things, conveying the prayers and sacrifices of men to the Gods, and communicating the commands and directions concerning the mode of worship most pleasing to them, from Gods to men. He fills up that intermediate space between these two classes of beings, so as to bind together, by his own power, the whole universe of things....The divine nature cannot immediately communicate with what is human, but all that intercourse and converse which is conceded by the Gods to men, both whilst they sleep and when they wake, subsists through the intervention of Love; and he who is wise in the science of this intercourse is supremely happy, and participates in the daemoniacal nature; whilst he who is wise in any other science or art, remains a mere ordinary slave.[55]

So far as Shelley was concerned, to read Plato was to place himself in the position of Socrates sitting at the feet of Diotima. Those ultimate questions posed by reason concerning the nature of man and the universe are unanswerable within the limitations of reason; the answer is to be found in revelation - the intervention of the divine nature through Love. The poet is one who is "wise in the science of this intercourse". Now the Greek word for revelation is apocalypse and upon the theory of poetry which Shelley derived from Plato the nature of his apocalyptic vision is to be understood.

When Shelley wrote <u>A Defense of Poetry</u>, in which he presents his theory of poetry, he was indebted not only to the <u>Symposium</u> but even more directly to the <u>Ion</u>, which he also translated. Here again Plato presents the notion of

divine intervention; this time, however, with direct reference to the poet. Shelley's translation of the key passage must be quoted at length for echoes of it are to be found throughout his Defense.

It is not that you are master of any art for the illustration of Homer, but it is a divine influence which moves you, like that which resides in the stone called Magnet by Euripides, and Heraclea by the people. For not only does this stone possess the power of attracting iron rings, but it can communicate to them the power of attracting other rings; so that you may see sometimes a long chain of rings, and other iron substances, attached and suspended one to the other by this influence. And as the power of the stone circulates through all the links of this series, and attaches each to each, so the Muse, communicating through those whom she has first inspired, to all others capable of sharing in the inspiration, the influence of that first enthusiasm, creates a chain and a succession. For the authors of those great poems which we admire, do not attain to excellence through the rules of any art, but they utter their beautiful melodies of verse in a state of inspiration, and, as it were, possessed by a spirit not their own. Thus the composers of lyrical poetry create those admired songs of theirs in a state of divine insanity, like the Corybantes, who lose all control over their reason in the enthusiasm of the sacred dance; and, during this supernatural possession, are excited to the rhythm and harmony which they communicate to men. Like the Bacchantes, who, when possessed by the God, draw honey and milk from the rivers, in which, when they come to their senses, they find nothing but simple water. For the souls of the poets, as poets tell us, have this peculiar ministration in the world. They tell us that these souls, flying like bees from flower to flower, and wandering over the gardens and meadows and the honey-flowing fountains of the Muses, return to us laden with the sweetness of melody; and arrayed as they are in the plumes of rapid imagination, they speak truth. For a poet is indeed a thing ethereally light, winged, and sacred, nor can he compose anything worth calling poetry until he becomes inspired, and as it were, mad, or whilst any reason remains in him. For whilst a man retains any portion of the thing called reason, he is utterly incompetent to produce poetry or to vaticinate.... The God seems purposely to have deprived all poets, prophets,

and soothsayers of every particle of reason and understanding, the better to adapt them to their employment as his ministers and interpreters; and that we, their auditors, may acknowledge that those who write so beautifully, are possessed, and address us, inspired by the God.[56]

This doctrine of poetic inspiration becomes the focal point of his Defense of Poetry. When Peacock sent him a copy of The Four Ages of Poetry (in answer to which Shelley wrote his Defense), Shelley wrote back (February 15, 1821) that he ought to read Plato's Ion and then reconsider his remarks.[57] The poet, says Shelley in his Defense,[58] is, in the act of creation, possessed of a divine madness so that what he writes comes not from his own consciousness but from a realm above consciousness over which he has no control: "it is as it were the interpenetration of a diviner nature through our own" acting "in a divine and unapprehended manner beyond and above consciousness." It has, therefore, nothing to do with the will. "A man cannot say, 'I will write poetry.' The greatest poets cannot say it; for the mind in creation is as a fading coal, which some invisible influence, like an inconstant wind, awakens to a transitory brightness ... and the conscious portions of our natures are unprophetic of its approach or its departure." The poet, when he "participates in the daemoniacal nature" ceases for the moment to be a man; it is only in the intervals between inspiration that "a poet becomes a man, and is abandoned to the sudden reflux of the influence under which others habitually live."

This "invisible influence" that awakens the mind "to a transitory brightness" and is compared to an "inconstant wind" is that hovering spirit that informs most of Shelley's poetry. Queen Mab, the Daemon of the world, who visits Ianthe in sleep and carries her soul into a visionary world whose circumference contains within it the entire universe, is its first poetic incarnation. It reappears again in Alastor as the veiled maiden who visits the poet in sleep and drives him to an untimely grave in his hopeless effort to find her counterpart in the world of reality. In the Hymn to Intellectual Beauty, it is that "awful shadow of some unseen Power" to which, as a result of its momentary penetration into his own soul, he has dedicated his powers. It is the beautiful lady in The Sensitive Plant whose presence is the source of life in nature, and it is Asia in Prometheus Unbound whom Prometheus addresses as the "Shadow of beauty unbeheld" (III, iii, 9). In Adonais, it is the One as distinct from the Many imaged in "the white radiance of Eternity" stained by the "dome of many-coloured glass". And in The Triumph of Life it is the informing spirit of the poets to which only Socrates and Christ remained faithful: when "they had touched the world with living flame" (130), they "fled back like eagles to their native noon" (131).

Under the influence of these "visitations of the divine", the poet, says Shelley in his Defense, "creates anew

the universe, after it has been annihilated in our minds by the recurrence of impressions blunted by reiteration."[59] And here Shelley is speaking of the creative imagination as a shaping spirit at work in the chaos of man's familiar world (i.e. the world of recurrent impressions which have become blunted by reiteration) and forcing it to assume a form which is the image of the "divinity in man" and therefore revealing to him the wonder of his being. An account of this shaping spirit of imagination Shelley thought he found, in its archetypal form, in Plato's account of the working of the Demi-urge in the Timaeus. In Adonais, it is described as the "One Spirit's plastic stress" which

> Sweeps through the dull dense world, compelling there
> All new successions to the forms they wear;
> Torturing the unwilling dross that checks its flight
> To it's [sic] own likeness, as each mass may bear;
> And bursting in it's beauty and its might
> From trees and beasts and men into the Heaven's light.
> (382-7.)

These lines are possibly Shelley's finest statement of the poet's labour in shaping his materials into a vision of ideal Beauty, that "naked and sleeping beauty, which is the spirit of its forms."[60]

In Plato's mythical account of the formation of the universe and man, the Demi-urge is the shaping spirit. Using as his model the world of the Forms, he shapes his material much in the manner of a sculptor modelling his clay. His material, however, is not completely amenable, so that he

is limited in the extent to which an order (which is the material image of the world of Forms) can be brought out of an original chaos. This recalcitrance of matter Plato explains by the idea of Necessity or "Errant Cause" (48). Necessity Plato defines as those causes which, "being destitute of reason, produce their sundry effects at random and without order" (46E). In contrast to Necessity is the Demi-urge, which works "with intelligence to produce what is good and desirable" (46E). The whole function of the Demi-urge is to win over Necessity by persuasion, thereby inducing her "to guide the greatest part [but not all] of the things that become towards what is best" (46C). The Demi-urge, therefore, Shelley interprets as performing the same creative function as his "One Spirit's plastic stress".

In his mythical picture of man's condition within the cosmos, Plato describes him first under the control of the Demi-urge and then under the control of Necessity. In the former condition, man lived in a Paradise which was a state of anarchism wherein man enjoyed the fruits of nature without the expenditure of physical effort. In the latter condition, man lived in the midst of terrible convulsion which worked havoc among every race of living men. The temporal separation of these two conditions, however, is simply a mythical device; in reality the two co-exist so that the work of persuading Necessity toward that which is good

and desirable always confronts man. Creation, in the world of becoming, is always being carried on. Continuous creation is the only answer to the threat of annihilation by which man is forever confronted in the realm of Necessity.

Returning again to the notion of divine inspiration which he had presented in the Symposium and the Ion, Plato says that man, in the world of Becoming, strives to recall the work and the instructions of the Demi-urge. Memory, however, gives way to forgetfulness so that without divine intervention man would be in the direst straits. The evidence of divine intervention is to be found in the legendary gifts of the gods - fire from Prometheus, the arts and crafts from Hephaestus and his consort, and seeds and plants from other benefactors. In each of these mythical figures the work of the Demi-urge is renewed: Prometheus, for example, brought fire from the realm of Necessity and converted it to the realm of intelligence by putting it at the service of man.

Viewing what Shelley has to say about reason and imagination in A Defense of Poetry in the light of Plato's conception of Necessity and the Demi-urge, it is possible to gain a clearer understanding of the apocalyptic nature of the creative imagination. Reason, says Shelley, is the "principle of analysis, and its action regards the relations of things, simply as relations; considering thoughts, not in

their integral unity, but as the algebraical representations which conduct to certain general results."[61] Reason, that is, is Godwin's law of Necessity, the eternal chain of causes that determines the motions of the physical and mental universe. Now Causation, Shelley, following Hume, describes in his Notes to Queen Mab as a "constant conjunction of similar objects and the consequent inference one from the other",[62] and this definition reappears in A Defense of Poetry as a description of the world unredeemed by the imagination. Imagination, on the other hand, is the principle of synthesis which annihilates that "constant conjunction of similar objects" (the product of mental fixation) and fuses them into a new harmony. Like Coleridge's conception of the secondary imagination, it "dissolves, diffuses and dissipates, in order to recreate; or where this process is rendered impossible yet still at all events it struggles to idealize and unify."[63]

Having established this distinction between reason and imagination, Shelley concludes in his Defense that poetry, as the expression of the imagination,

> ... defeats the curse which binds us to be subjected to the accident of surrounding impressions. And whether it spreads its own figured curtain, or withdraws life's dark veil from before the scene of things, it equally creates for us a being within our being. It makes us the inhabitants of a world to which the familiar world is a chaos. It reproduces the common Universe of which we are portions and percipients, and it purges from our inward sight the film of familiarity which obscures from us the wonder of our being.... It creates anew the universe, after it has been annihilated in our minds by the recurrence of impressions blunted by reiteration. It justifies the bold and true words of Tasso: Non

merita nome di creatore, se non Iddio ed il Poeta.[64]
The transmutation that Shelley here describes from the chaos of the familiar world, to which man is bound as by a curse, to a world that expresses "the wonder of our being" is the work, in Plato's terms, of the Demi-urge in its persuasion of Necessity.[65] The poet, as Plato points out, participates in the work of the Demi-urge, and, when Shelley says that the poet participates in the infinite, the eternal and the one, he has in mind Plato's archetypal pattern as he understood it. The imagination, to use Coleridge's definition, is the "repetition in the finite mind of the eternal act of creation in the infinite I AM."[66]

Under the influence of his renewed interest in Plato after 1815, Shelley developed, therefore, a coherent conception of the nature of poetry which contained within itself the principle of its own integrity. Identifying himself with the mythopoeic poet, to whom he subordinated the purely rational philosopher, he found his own centre in the world of the imagination. Into Plato's creation myth he read the type of all creative work on the part of poets. Man is engaged in a giant conflict with Necessity; his task is perpetually to renew the universe of which he is a part and thereby rid himself of all that binds him to surrounding impressions. For this labour of the ages (which is also the labour of the moment) imagination, quickened by the "visita-

tions of the Divinity in man" is needed. Without it, humanity perishes. Civilization finds its origin in the creative faculty; poets, therefore, are the "unacknowledged legislators of the world."[67]

It is not the work of the poet, however, to make the application of his vision to society; that labour belongs to the "promoters of utility"[68] in the limited sense, who "have their appointed office in society."[69] Their task is to "follow the footsteps of poets, and copy the sketches of their creations into the book of common life",[70] while the poets, once they have discharged their Promethean fire, must, like Christ and Socrates, fly back to their "native noon."[71]

The implication is clear: Shelley's apocalyptic vision (i.e. the vision of a universe continuously created as distinct from a universe continuously perceived) belongs within a verbal universe; it is not an earthly kingdom that will one day be established among men. Like Plato's Republic, it is a pattern set up in heaven. In 1812, Shelley confused the universe of poetic vision and the universe of men. Accepting Godwin's doctrine of progress and perfectibility, he thought that the process of Becoming would one day (by the law of Necessity) be absorbed into Being. There is no doubt that this hope lies behind Queen Mab; but there is also no doubt that this hope enmeshed him in the corrupt world of men to such a degree that the apocalyptic

vision is badly stained by the "dome of many-coloured glass.". In Prometheus Unbound that stain is removed: the apocalypse is a psychic event within the human soul that is independent of time and belongs to the unchanging forms of man's nature, at once both human and divine. Making use of one of the recurring paradoxes of Christ's teaching, Shelley, in his maturity, declares that the triumph of life is the defeat of vision.

So long as Shelley remained under the direct influence of Godwin's doctrines he could not escape the fact that poetry cannot contain within itself the principle of its own integrity; the judgement of poetry is referable to the moral progress of society. Society must be the ultimate judge. From this point of view, poetry must be didactic. Hence, in 1812, Shelley says that "poetical beauty ought to be subordinate to the inculcated moral," and that metaphorical language should be "a pleasing vehicle for useful and momentous instruction."[72] Such statements, of course, are evident nonsense, but they do reveal the extent of Shelley's misdirected passion for reforming the world in 1812.

The real break with Godwin, however, lies in the view of time which is implicit in A Defense of Poetry. The view of time in Godwin's system, as the doctrine of gradualism shows, is linear: a fixed succession of events expressive of a gradual increase of human consciousness toward an ultimate

state of perfection or pure intelligence. Now the difficulty involved for Shelley, as a poet, in this linear view of time was the fact that it was shapeless; the content of time could not be consolidated into a formulated vision. The perfection of man, involved as it was with the passage of time, is an abstraction lost in the indefiniteness of future ages. The whole weakness of Godwin's system from the poet's point of view was that, while the strength of his argument lay in his faith in human perfectibility, the faith itself was devoid of the compelling power of vision. And without that vision, there was no incentive to moral improvement. Man, Shelley realized within himself, could not be motivated to the performance of benevolent acts by an abstraction called "distant ages". "We want," says Shelley in A Defense of Poetry, "the creative faculty to imagine that which we know"[73].

In contrast to this linear conception of time, the limitations of which Shelley realized as early as 1812 when he wrote to Godwin concerning the need for Stoical resignation on his part, is the conception of time presented by Plato in the Timaeus, and implicit in Shelley's Defense. The Demi-urge, says Plato, wished to create in the generation of the universe the likeness, so far as that is possible, of the eternal Form upon which it is modelled. The nature of the living Being serving as the model, however, is eternal

and this character it was impossible to confer upon the generated thing. At best, he could make a "moving likeness of eternity" (37D) and so "he made, of eternity, that abides in unity, an everlasting likeness moving according to number - that to which we have given the name Time" (37D). To move according to number means to Plato that time is not a straight line of unlimited extent in both directions, but a circle which, though limited and circumscribed, is yet a symbol of eternity. It is the circular motion of time that makes it a moving image of eternity. Time means the complete circle in which the beginning is joined to the end. All of time constitutes the Great Year, the single period of the whole which is the complete cycle of life.

When Shelley speaks of time in A Defense of Poetry he is thinking of it in terms of the single period of the whole whose form is a single cyclic poem to which all the poets since the beginning of the world have contributed an episode. Drawing his analogy from Plato's comparison of divine inspiration to the attracting power of a magnet, he says:

The sacred links of that chain have never been entirely disjoined, which descending through the minds of many men is attached to those great minds, whence as from a magnet the invisible effluence is sent forth, which at once connects, animates, and sustains the life of all. It is the faculty which contains within itself the seeds at once of its own and of social renovation. And let us not circumscribe the effects of the bucolic and erotic poetry within the limits of the sensibility of those to whom it was addressed. They may have perceived the beauty of those immortal compositions.

simply as fragments and isolated portions: those who are more finely organized, or born in a happier age, may recognize them as episodes to that great poem, which all the poets like the co-operating thoughts of one great mind, have built up since the beginning of the world.[74]

This single great poem is the apocalypse which contains all of time as the "moving image of eternity." It is not Godwin's far-off event. The apocalypse, so far as it is in time, is the fusion of all time into a vision of eternity quickened by divine inspiration and shaped by the creative imagination.

Chapter 2

THE DIONYSIAN MYTH IN THE POETRY OF SHELLEY

As the disciple of Godwin, Shelley was committed to the creation of a literature which provided an interpretation of the content of human consciousness. One of the best examples of that kind of literature Shelley found in Godwin's novels which, in 1812, he considered far superior to poetry. "I have in preparation a novel," Shelley writes in that year," ... constructed to convey metaphysical and political opinions... it shall receive more correction than I trouble to give to wild romance and poetry."[1] Here again is one of those uncompleted projects expressive of his distrust of poetry. The source of that distrust is clear: in the creation of poetry (even as early as Queen Mab) Shelley found himself under the influence of what he later called the "visitations of the divinity in Man".[2] For an avowed materialist (which Shelley claimed to be in 1812) who rejected the idea that there was any source of knowledge other than the senses, the notion of divine inspiration was untenable. No critic of Shelley has

failed to note the contradiction in Queen Mab when he makes use of a purely spiritual vision (Ianthe is "laid asleep in body" and "becomes a living soul") to present a materialistic doctrine. Whenever Shelley was driven to the creation of poetry (which, he recognized, has nothing to do with the will), he found himself confronted by psychic realms existing outside consciousness altogether. Since these psychic realms were difficult for an avowed Godwinite to accept, he distrusted poetry as sheer imagination and therefore irrational. Few Romantic poets during their years of apprenticeship distrusted the imagination more than Shelley.

Between 1812 and 1815 this harsh opposition between reason and imagination was gradually broken down until, in the prose works of 1815, Shelley reveals a new understanding of Godwin, who had become, by the time Shelley met him, an immaterialist and a follower of Berkeley. He now saw in Godwin's philosophy that the imagination was the instrument of all human progress. The importance of intuition in Godwin's system had become clear to him.

Not only did Shelley recognize with growing intensity after 1815 that discursive and intuitive reasoning are two distinct modes of mental action, but also two distinct ways of viewing the universe and man's position in it. The influence here of Plato has been pointed out in the first

chapter. Any attempt to provide a rational account of the universe, Shelley realized as early as 1812, must ultimately be an account of the mechanism of the mind. The existence of an external world separate and apart from man's mode of perceiving it is simply a rational inference. In the initial experience of perception (i.e. before the mind has analysed the experience) no such thing as an external world exists. The sense of externality is the result, as Godwin himself realized, of mind abstracting itself from the act of perception and becoming the observer of its own activity. It is consciousness (or "second thought" as Godwin calls it) which affects a separation between what is perceived and the actual perception of it. This separation, and the mental, as distinct from the physical, universe that is built up upon it, is, as Godwin says, the result of science and improvement. It is the analytical mode of reasoning which alone belongs to consciousness. The synthetic power of mind in which subject and object are one is outside of consciousness altogether.

Now it is precisely with this synthetic power of mind (the principle of synthesis) that Shelley is concerned as a poet. Shelley was fired by Godwin's idea of political justice. But where did this ideal of justice derive from? It certainly had no counterpart in the human world either in the past or in the present; it was not, therefore, derived

either from a study of the past or an analysis of the present. The idea of justice, that is, was not derived from empirical knowledge. Godwin's answer concerning the source of his conception of justice relies upon his belief (not subject to rational explanation) in the parallel, yet interactive, systems of mind and matter. The physical universe, he says, is a universal system governed by immutable laws; justice is the mental counterpart of that system. The idea of justice, therefore, is the result of an intuition of the "wholeness" of the universe. Since the idea of justice has its source in an intuition of "wholeness", it does not belong to the realm of discursive reason or consciousness as Godwin defines it. Insofar, therefore, as Godwin identifies justice with consciousness, he is attributing to consciousness truths which do not properly belong to it.

With the help of Plato, Shelley came to realize this fallacy in Godwin's thinking. Plato's ideal of justice is a pattern set up in heaven which can never become established in the world of Becoming. How can man break through the limitations of consciousness and enter this ideal world where justice resides? Godwin answered, by science and improvement. That answer Shelley rejected in favour of Plato's doctrine of divine intervention. Ignoring Plato's dialectic altogether, as well as the Socratic irony in

which his doctrine of divine madness is hedged, he answered that man cannot of himself enter the ideal world where justice resides: he must be possessed of the Divine which provides the spark that ignites the imagination. Through the imagination the incarnation of justice is realized; the perceived forms of this world are transformed into the ideal Forms in the realm of Ideas.

This clarification, which finds its fullest expression in A Defense of Poetry, reversed, in a sense, the relationship between Godwin and Shelley. Where formerly Shelley had viewed himself as the disciple of Godwin ("a luminary too dazzling for the darkness which surrounds him"[3]), he now viewed Godwin as the disciple of himself in his vocation as poet. Godwin belongs to the tradition of great moral reformers which includes Locke, Hume and Rousseau; Shelley belongs to the tradition of great poets which includes Dante, Petrarch and Milton. The superiority of the latter tradition to the former is clear enough in his Defense.

> The exertions of Locke, Hume, Gibbon, Voltaire, Rousseau, and their disciples, in favour of oppressed and deluded humanity, are entitled to the gratitude of mankind. Yet it is easy to calculate the degree of moral and intellectual improvement which the world would have exhibited, had they never lived. A little more nonsense would have been talked for a century or two; and perhaps a few more men, women, and children, burnt as heretics.... But it exceeds all imagination to conceive what would have been the moral condition of the world if neither Dante, Petrarch, Boccaccio, Chaucer, Shakespeare, Calderon, Lord Bacon, nor Milton, had ever existed.... The human mind could never, except by the intervention of these excitements, have been awakened

to the intervention of the grosser sciences, and that application of analytical reasoning to the aberrations of society, which it is now attempted to exalt over the direct expression of the inventive and creative faculty itself.[4]

The intuitive, pre-conscious Gestalt experience which Godwin says is perception itself is what Shelley attempts to recapture in his poetry in order to redeem perception from the blunting effect of analytical reasoning. It is an unsophisticated affirmation of existence, a repetition in the poet's imagination of that initial act of God whereby He says "Be" and it is. Such an act means that what is, is what is perceived: what is, is the imagination, and what is perceived are the objects of the imagination. This imaginative mode of perception in which the distinction of subject and object is removed so that the two are fused into unity, may be described as a state of <u>participation mystique</u>. This state characterizes all mythical thought: man is experienced as a part of society, and society as embedded in nature and dependent, therefore, upon cosmic forces. This fusion of man, society, nature, and the cosmos is the visionary form that Shelley achieves in <u>Prometheus Unbound</u>.

Because, in mythical thought, nature is not an "it" but a "thou", the confrontation of man with nature is an inter-personal relationship involving a response that is not psychically indifferent; on the contrary, it evokes the whole range of psychic activity. This psychic participation

in nature (as in society and the cosmos) presents a vision of the community of life in which the bond of unity is not one of causality but of sympathy.

There is, in mythical thought, no conception of physical events having their source in physical causes; this fact may be illustrated with reference to the prevalent mythical notion of reincarnation. Cassirer[5] points out that in the mythical world of primitive man the laws of sexual procreation are unknown so that birth is viewed as a sort of reincarnation in which causality is replaced by a real identity. The Arunta of Central Australia, for example, believe that the spirits of the dead who belonged to their totem wait for their rebirth in definite localities and penetrate into the bodies of the women who pass such a spot. Each generation, therefore, not only descends from the animal ancestors, but is the actual embodiment of these ancestors. In their most important religious festival they not only imitate the life and deeds of their forefathers, but in the imitation the forefathers actually reappear. And their presence, immediately seen and felt, has a beneficent influence: without their presence the rain would not fall nor the soil bear fruit.

By a first act of identification man asserts his fundamental unity with his human and animal ancestors - by a second act he identifies his own life with the life of nature. As a matter of fact there can be no sharp distinction between the two realms. They are on the same level; for to the primitive mind nature itself is not a physical thing governed

by physical laws. One and the same society - the society of life - includes and embraces all animate and inanimate beings.[6]

This intuitive sense of the unity of life, which is the subject-matter of myth, cannot be preserved without constant renewal; hence the primitive need of rite as a perpetual source of renewal both in man and nature. Without this renewal, nature would separate herself from man, man would separate himself from society and the whole community of life be destroyed. And, from the point of view of mythical thought, this dividing, life-destroying force takes over as soon as the intuition of the whole is lost in the rational analysis of the parts. The separation of subject and object, with the attendant creation of a non-human, impersonal and disinterested universe, is the thing which the rites (the dramatic element, as distinct from the epic element, of myth) seek to avoid. There is, then, implicit in rites (and explicit in myth) a conflict between two modes of perception: the homogeneous and the heterogeneous.

Shelley's subordination of reason to imagination, and his ardent defense of poetry in an age in which "analytical reasoning" seeks to exalt itself "over the direct expression of the inventive and creative faculty itself",[7] places him within the tradition of mythical thought. The emergence of his view of the creative imagination after the relative sterility of those years in which he was a "votary

of Reason"[8] shows a rejection of logos in favour of mythos.

In accounting for Shelley's shift from logos to mythos, it is important to realize that his short career as a "votary of Reason" was but an interlude in which he momentarily departed from his real nature. Until the time he was introduced to Godwin's philosophy (1810), he was, he says, "haunted with a passion for the wildest and most extravagant romances."[9] "Ancient books of Chemistry and Magic", he continues,

> were perused with an enthusiasm of wonder, almost amounting to belief. My sentiments were unrestricted by anything within me; external impediments were numerous, and strongly applied; their effect was merely temporary.[10]

After he read Godwin's Enquiry, however, he says that his entire outlook underwent a radical change. He tells Godwin:

> It is now a period of more than two years since first I saw your inestimable book on "Political Justice;" it opened to my mind fresh and more extensive views; it materially influenced my character, and I arose from its perusal a wiser and a better man. I was no longer the votary of romance; tillthen I had existed in an ideal world -- now I found that in this universe of ours was enough to excite the interest of the heart, enough to employ the discussions of reason.[11]

As Godwin learned to his sorrow, however, Shelley's conversion to his doctrines was by no means complete. Godwin soon realized that it was impossible for Shelley to accept his concept of gradualism, that moderation was temperamentally impossible for him. As his relationship with Shelley reveals, Godwin soon became, in some respects, an

external impediment whose "effect was merely temporary." Shelley, once familiar with Godwin's ideas, tended from the outset to view them less in the perspective of the hard realities of this world and more in the perspective of a "votary of romance". Godwin's doctrines belonged for Shelley, like the doctrines of Plato, in an "ideal world".

For this reason, it is not surprising that Shelley found little or no difficulty, in the summer of 1812, in relating Godwin's ideas to the esoteric doctrines of his new friend, John Frank Newton. At Bracknell, he and Shelley were the centre of what amounted to an Orphic cult. Newton, the acknowledged leader of the group, interpreted all mythopoeic literature in the light of the Hindu Zodiac which, he believed, incorporated the entire Orphic theogony. Following his lead, Shelley, for the first time, became seriously interested in classical literature, interpreting it in the light of Orphism. "I have translated the two Essays of Plutarch," he writes to Hogg (November 26, 1813),

> περὶ σαρκοφαγίας which we [Peacock and Shelley] read together. They are very excellent. I intend to comment upon them, and to reason in my preface concerning the Orphic and Pythagoric system of diet.[12]

The "Orphic and Pythagoric system of diet" upon which Shelley was reasoning is presented, in Queen Mab, as the means by which the golden age will be restored. Godwin's Utopia will be established by universal conversion to Orphism. Shelley was finding his way back into his own imaginative

universe.

Orphism is essentially the refinement of the primitive Dionysian cult about which Shelley was now to learn a great deal. To his understanding of it can be, in part at least, attributed his whole conception of mythopoeic literature. It provides the mythological framework underlying his view of the creative imagination and the archetypal pattern of his own apocalyptic vision. It must, therefore, now be examined in some detail.

The history of the Dionysian myth shows it passing through three fairly distinct phases. The first phase is one of primitive, orgiastic rite brought on by extreme intoxication; here Dionysus appears as the decadent wine-god. The second phase shows the transforming power of Orphism in which mere madness is elevated to divine madness and the cult of Dionysus becomes a religion of purification and rebirth. In the final phase, which is the phase evident in the Dialogues of Plato, mythos is replaced by logos and myth and rite are rejected as revelations of ultimate reality. In examining the Dionysian myth, therefore, each of the phases will be examined with reference to Shelley's attitude to it. On the basis of this examination, Shelley's conception of the myth and its importance as providing the archetypal form of his poetry should be clear.

The cult of Dionysus was imported into Greece prob-

ably from Thrace where it was associated with a wild tribe known as the Satrae who made their home high up in the mountains. Herodotus, in his account of Xerxes' march through Thrace, has left an account of them:

> The Satrae were subject to no man so far as we know, but down to our day they alone of all the Thracians are free, for they dwell on high mountains covered with woods of all kinds and snow-clad, and they are keenly war-like. These are the people that possess an oracle shrine of Dionysus and this oracle is on the topmost range of the mountains. And those among the Satrae who interpret the oracle are called Bessi.[13]

The Bessi, presumably the priestly class among the Satrae, are described by Strabo as the wildest and most savage of the brigands who dwelt on and around Mount Haemus.[14]

The savagery of the Dionysian cult is characteristic of the descriptions of its advance through Asia and Europe. Wherever it went, it converted the people by reducing them to a state of madness brought on by intoxication. Nonnus,[15] whom Shelley read with Peacock, treats the legendary conquests of Dionysus in the epic manner; he is a world conqueror like Alexander going from country to country subduing the people first in huge and bloody battles and then by converting them through the intoxicating powers of wine. His description of the conquest of India, for example, is an orgy of blood and slaughter climaxed by Dionysus turning "a bubbling bloodbath mingled with Indian gore" (XIV, 410) into wine. This miracle, says Nonnus, Dionysus performed because the "god pitied his foes in his heart

of merry cheer"(XIV, 412). The Indian warriors drink the wine, and, "driven by the gadfly of mind-robbing drink," (XV, 27) attack a herd of cattle believing it to be the fierce warriors of Dionysus; another attacks trees" as if cutting with his sabre through the tresses of unshorn Dionysus"(XV, 52). Reduced to madness, they then imitate the Corybants and the Satyrs in a wild and frenzied dance until they fall into a stupor "tormented in mind by immoderate wine, doing grace to Pasithea's father, Dionysus." (XV, 91f.)

The conquest of Thebes, as depicted by Euripides in the Bacchae (which Shelley also read), shows the same abandoned frenzy issuing in brutal and inhuman acts. When Pentheus, King of Thebes, resists the advance of the Dionysian cult in his own city, the fierce Maenads, led by Agave, his mother, turn upon him and tear him limb from limb.

> She, foaming at the mouth, her rolling eyeballs
> Whirling around, in her unreasoning reason,
> By Bacchus all possessed, knew, heeded not.
> She caught him in her arms, seized his right hand,
> And with her feet set on his shrinking side,
> Tore out the shoulder - not with her own strength:
> The god made easy that too cruel deed.
> And Ino laboured on the other side,
> Rending the flesh: Autonoe, all the rest,
> Pressed fiercely on, and there was one wild din -
> He groaning deep, while he had breath to groan,
> They shouting triumph; and one bore an arm,
> One a still-sandalled foot; and both his sides
> Lay open rent. Each in her bloody hands
> Tossed wildly to and fro lost Pentheus' limbs.
> The trunk lay far aloof, 'neath the rough rocks
> Part, part amid the forest's thick-strewn leaves
> Not easy to be found. The wretched head,
> Which the mad mother, seizing in her hands
> Had on a thyrsus fixed, she bore aloft

All o'er Cithaeron, as a mountain lion's
Leading her sisters in their Maenad dance.[16]

The loathsome brutality of this act brought on by wine is characteristic of the Dionysian cult in its first stage of orgiastic rite. Shelley, as might be expected, completely rejected it in this form. Describing a statue of Bacchus by Michelangelo, he says:

The countenance of this figure is the most revolting mistake of the spirit and meaning of Bacchus. It looks drunken, brutal, and narrow-minded, and has an expression of dissoluteness the most revolting.... It is altogether without unity, as was the idea of the Deity of Bacchus in the conception of a Catholic.... It wants as a work of art unity and simplicity; as a representation of the Greek Deity of Bacchus it wants everything.[17]

Shelley is here viewing this primitive conception of Bacchus in the light of the whole transformation that was brought about in the cult through the influence of Orphism. "Orpheus", says Miss Harrison in her Prolegomena to the Study of Greek Religion, "took an ancient superstition, deep-rooted in the savage ritual of Dionysus (possession by the god through intoxication) and lent to it a new spiritual significance."[18] Henceforth it could be said, in the words of the Orphic text, 'Many are the wand-bearers, few are the Bacchoi.'[19] Not only did Orphism change the conception of the god, but also the means by which that godhead could be attained. The means was no longer physical intoxication, but spiritual ecstasy through abstinence and rites of purification.

Drawing his evidence from various sources, Guthrie, in Orpheus and Greek Religion, presents a portrait of Orpheus that stands out in marked contrast to that of the wild mountain-god, Dionysus. "In personal character ", he says,

> he is never a hero in the modern sense. His outstanding quality is a gentleness amounting at times to softness. From war-like attributes he is entirely free, differing in this from the archer-god whom in some ways he so closely resembles. The atmosphere of calm that surrounds him differs strangely too from the normal habits of the wild mountain-god whose religion he adopted. Music may excite as well as soothe, but the symbols and tympana of a Thracian or Phrygian orgy seem at first to have little to do with the sweet tones of Orpheus' lyre. The power of the lyre was to soften the hearts of warriors and turn their thoughts to peace, just as it could tame the wildest of beasts.[20]

This character of Orpheus fused, as is the way with myth, with the character of Dionysus so that, as in the Bacchae, both personalities intermingle, become one, only to separate again. In the choral odes of the Bacchae, for example, the picture of Dionysus is quite distinct from the vengeful god driving, by trickery, Pentheus to his horrific death. He is presented as a god of joy, a bringer of new life to Thebes evoking within the citizens a peace that surpasses human understanding.

> O lead me! lead me, till I stand,
> Bromius! - sweet Bromius! - where high swelling
> Soars the Pierian muses' dwelling -
> Olympus' summit hoar and high -
> Thou revel-loving Deity!
> For there are all the graces,
> And sweet desire is there,
> And to those hallowed places
> To lawful rites the Bacchanals repair.

The deity, the son of Jove,
The banquet is his joy,
Peace, the wealth-giver, doth he love,
That nurse of many a noble boy.[21]

Shelley, in his description of one of the Ampelus-Bacchus group which he saw in Florence, demonstrates that his identification is with Orphic-Dionysus.

The figures [Bacchus and Ampelus] are walking as it were with a sauntering and idle pace, and talking to each other as they walk, and this is expressed in the motions of their delicate and flowing forms. One arm of Bacchus rests on the shoulder of Ampelus, and the other, the fingers being curved as with a burning spirit which animates their flexible joints, is gracefully thrown forward corresponding with the advance of the opposite leg. He has sandals and buskins clasped with two serpent heads, and his leg is cinctured with their skins. He is crowned with vine leaves laden with their crude fruit, and the crisp leaves fall with the inertness of a lithe and faded leaf over his rich and over-hanging hair, which gracefully divided on his forehead falls in delicate wreaths upon his neck and breast. Ampelus with a beast skin over his shoulder holds a cup in his right hand, and with his left half embraces the waist of Bacchus. Just as you might have seen (yet how seldom from their dissevering and tyrannical institutions do you see) a younger and an older boy at school walking in some remote grassy spot on their playground with that tender friendship towards each other which has so much of love. The countenance of Bacchus is sublimely sweet and lovely ....It has a divine and supernatural beauty, as one who walks through the world untouched by its corruptions, its corrupting cares; it looks like one who unconsciously yet with delight confers pleasure and peace. The flowing fulness and the roundness of the breast and belly, whose lines fading into each other, are continued with a gentle motion as it were to the utmost extremity of his limbs. Like some fine strain of harmony which flows round the soul and enfolds it, and leaves it in the soft astonishment of a satisfaction, like the pleasure of love with one whom we most love, which having taken away desire, leaves pleasure, sweet pleasure. The countenance of Ampelus is in every respect inferior.... But the Bacchus is immortal beauty.[22]

This peace-loving lyrical figure of Dionysus could not, however, provide an adequate archetype for the Dionysian

religion no matter how purified it became under the influence of Orphism. That religion, as presented in Orphism, had for its central drama a giant conflict of spirit and flesh which could be resolved only by the descent of the god, or, more properly, the ascent of man to a state of divine madness in which he became the god. For that struggle the primitive figure of Dionysus was also needed if it was to be given adequate definition. Together the two figures present the struggle in the process and the ideal calm in the resolution. And Shelley in his revolutionary poems preserves something of the primitive Dionysus. In the guise of the wind-god he is both destroyer and preserver, bringing in the wake of resurrection both storm and ruin.

Orpheus, unlike Dionysus, was known as the author of a religion based upon the written word; he is the theologos and when, in the epic of Apollonius, he raises his voice to sing, the theme of his lay is cosmogonical. The original theogony of Orpheus (if indeed there is an original) no longer exists so that information about it is second hand, a major source being the writings of the Neo-Platonists. Much of this secondhand material has been gathered together by various scholars of Greek religion, including Rhode (Psyche), Harrison (Prologomena to the Study of Greek Religion) and Guthrie (Orpheus and Greek Religion). From all of this material, the theogony of the

Orphics can be constructed at least in its essential outlines. No attempt will be made to explore all the ramifications and variations (which grew in the retelling), for they lie outside the scope of this study. The concern, here, is to discover the archetypal pattern of Shelley's poetry. Just as Shelley read into the account of the Demi-urge in the Timaeus the type of the creative imagination as a shaping spirit at work upon its materials, so into the Orphic myth he read the mythopoeic form of visionary poetry to the making of which he was but one contributor.

Out of Chronos are born Aither and a great yawning gulf. In Aither, Chronos fashions an egg; the egg splits in two and Phanes, the first born of the gods (Protagonos) springs forth. He is described as "a figure of shining light, with golden wings on his shoulders, four eyes and the heads of various animals",[23] and is identified with Eros and Dionysus by the Orphic theologians. Phanes or Eros or Dionysus is the first creator of all things. He made a home for the gods and was their first king. There are men too in the age of Phanes, but they belonged to the Golden Age which is now a vanished era.

The first creation of all things under Phanes is then replaced by a second creation of all things under Zeus. The Orphic rendering of this second creation is the swallowing of Phanes by Zeus: "Thus then engulfing the might

of Erikepaios, the First-born, he held the body of all things in the hollow of his belly; and he mingled with his own limbs the power and strength of the god. Therefore together with him all things within Zeus were created anew ." 24

From Zeus was born Dionysus, the last to rule over the gods, for Zeus, when he was born, set him on his throne and put his own sceptre in his hands. But the Titans, who had found new life under the rule of Zeus, were jealous of Dionysus and with the help of Hera, the lawful wife of Zeus, plotted to kill him. Using a mirror and various playthings, the Titans distracted the infant's mind and slew him in the form of a bull (in which disguise he attempted to protect himself), and then devoured him. But the heart of Dionysus was saved by Athene who brought it to Zeus. Zeus cut open his thigh and within the male womb of Zeus the god was reconstituted and brought back to life. Dionysus, by the Orphics, is called the thrice-born: Dionysus-Phanes, Dionysus-Zagreus (son of Zeus) and Dionysus, the resurrected. And it is this third birth of Dionysus that is celebrated in the central Orphic rite.

The devouring of Dionysus-Zagreus provides the explanation not only of man's creation but of his condition in this world. When Zeus saw that the Titans had tasted the flesh of Dionysus, he launched a thunderbolt at them

and burned them up. Out of the smoking remnants of the Titans there arose the new race of men. Man's nature, therefore, is two-fold. He is born from the Titans, the wicked sons of earth, but these Titans contain fragments of the Body of Dionysus, son of Zeus. Man is, consequently, both mortal and divine; his chief purpose here on earth is to liberate himself from the evil nature of his mortality and assume that immortality which is the recovery of his own divinity. It is for this reason that the Orphic rites of re-birth reach their climax in calling upon the god to descend upon them and release them from their Titanic selves: Dionysus, in his third resurrection, is the vision of a divine humanity restored to unity after being scattered into multiplicity. The words ascribed to Orpheus by his pupil Musaios sum up the whole significance of the myth: "Everything comes to be out of the One and is resolved into the One."[25]

Both Gruppe and Guthrie argue that this rather elaborate myth is not Orphic in its origins. The Orphic theologians simply gathered up the material handed down from a more primitive age and remoulded it to suit their own conceptions. Actually, Gruppe[26] argues, the Orphics had a philosophical idea to express and expressed it through giving a new meaning to popular myths. In other words, in Orphism, the transition from <u>mythos</u> to <u>logos</u> is underway.

The question is raised by Guthrie concerning the reason why the Orphics held on to the myths. His answer is an ingenious one which prepares the way for an understanding of Plato's attitude to Orphism. The Orphics, he says, preserved the myths because of the innate conservatism of the Greeks who would think twice before deserting their family gods for a purely philosophical conception. In the figure of Dionysus-Zagreus, Zeus was still the father of the gods. Olympus remained intact.

> What is an Orphic myth? Can we suppose that myths as crude as those which we find in the Orphic writings were intended by their authors to convey a spiritual meaning? Of course not, if we suppose the Orphic writers to have been the inventors of the myths. Yes, if we suppose them to have caught up the material handed down to them from a more primitive age and remoulded it to suit their own conceptions, as we have now seen them doing. Why did they trouble to remould it instead of breaking loose from its trammels? On that point we have said something already, and in this summing up I prefer simply to counter the question with another: why is the story of Jonah and the whale still read in churches in the enlightened twentieth century?[27]

The power of Orphism to shape the material of popular myths to its spiritual and philosophical end is what Shelley considers to be the peculiar genius of the Greek poets. Out of the wild errors of the primitive Dionysian cult and crude mythology, he says, the Greek poets moulded a vision of "ideal perfection."[28] For Shelley, therefore, Orphism contained within it a statement of the whole meaning of art in its power to take crude materials and transfigure them. The words ascribed to Musaios that "every-

thing comes to be out of the One and is resolved into the One" is a statement of what art reveals. This is not to say, of course, that Orphism is the source of Shelley's view of art. There is no more a source of Shelley's theory of art than there is a source of his theory of the creative imagination, if by source is meant Shelley's reading. As with Blake, so with Shelley:

> I must Create a System or be enslav'd by another Man's.
> I will not Reason and Compare: my business is to Create.[29]

In the process of creation, Shelley became increasingly aware of kindred spirits whose own accounts helped him to clarify the nature of what was going on within himself. Finally he was able to generalize and speak for all poets who share in the creation of that one great poem built up since the beginning of history. What is recounted in Orphism was an analogue of what was going on in himself and what, as shall now be pointed out, was going on in the writers of Greek tragedy. Orphism, it might be said, was to Shelley what the Bible was to Blake: the great code of art. With one important qualification, however: for Shelley the poetry of Orphism and the poetry of the Bible were, in reality, the same vision.

In Greek tragedy, the true significance of the Dionysian myth was revealed. Here the struggle of man between his Titanic nature and his Dionysian self-hood was present-

ed, but always with the Titanic nature acting as a "thin disguise of circumstance" behind which his "ideal perfection" could be seen. And the presence of that "ideal perfection" behind the mask evoked, in the midst of crime and suffering, an "exalted calm" because the god was there. "The tragedies of the Athenian poets", says Shelley,

> are as mirrors in which the spectator beholds himself, under the thin disguise of circumstance, stript of all but that ideal perfection and energy which everyone feels to be the internal type of all that he loves, admires, and would become. The imagination is enlarged by a sympathy with pains and passions so mighty, that they distend in his conception the capacity of that by which they are conceived; and the good affections are strengthened by pity, indignation, terror, and sorrow; and an exalted calm is prolonged from the satiety of this high exercise of them into the tumult of the familiar life; every crime is disarmed of half of its horror and all its contagion by being represented as the fatal consequence of the unfathomable agencies of nature; error is thus divested of its wilfulness; men can no longer cherish it as the creation of their own choice. In a drama of the highest order there is little food for censure or hatred; it teaches rather self-knowledge and self-respect. Neither the mind nor the eye can see itself unless reflected upon that which it resembles.[30]

What Shelley sees in tragedy is essentially the same vision as Nietzsche's: "the one truly real Dionysus appears in a multiplicity of forms, in the mask of a fighting hero and entangled, as it were, in the net of individual will."[31] And the audience, in participating in the drama, undergoes <u>katharsis</u> and is purified. For Shelley, with his emphasis upon the moral effect of drama upon the audience, art is, in some sense, a purification rite. It teaches, again to use Nietzche's words, that "individuation

is the primal cause of evil, and art... a joyous hope that the spell of individuation may be broken as an augury of restored oneness."[32] This vision of the meaning of Greek tragedy was for Shelley the archetypal vision of all art.

In the philosophy of Plato there is an evident turning away from mythos in favour of logos. Shelley, as already pointed out, simply ignores, by and large, Plato as a dialectician and proclaims that he is a great mythopoeic poet. The obvious conclusion to draw, of course, is that Shelley misunderstood Plato's philosophy and simply read into it what he wanted to find; namely, the evidence of a mythopoeic poet whose source of power was the creative imagination. That Shelley did read this notion into both the Timaeus and the Symposium has already been demonstrated. The question now is: to what extent did Shelley misread Plato? The answer lies in Plato's view of myth. In what follows, it will be suggested that Plato came closer to an understanding of myth than any author that Shelley had read and that in Plato's conception of myth is implicit the Romantic view. Through an examination of Plato's attitude to myth, therefore, it is possible to uncover the springs of the myth-making power in the human psyche. Having uncovered those springs which, like the river Alph, flow "through caverns measureless to man", it is possible to

arrive at some final understanding of what is meant by archetypal pattern. It should reveal Shelley's own conception of what, ultimately, poetry is.

Concerning Plato's attitude to Orphism, Guthrie says that not only is he the primary source for a knowledge of the doctrines of the cult, but that he himself regarded the "speculations of the Orphic theologians... with a respect that was near akin to reverence."[33] And, as evidence, he cites passage after passage in the Dialogues in which Plato makes use of Orphic myths to substantiate his own philosophical opinion. Cassirer, on the other hand, argues that Plato rejected myth and that his reason for excluding poets from his Republic was that the poet was a vates, a myth-maker.[34] Curiously enough, both of these positions, on the surface in complete opposition to each other, express aspects of Plato's attitude to myth.

The problem of the One and the Many is as central in the philosophy of Plato as it is in the Orphic myth of Dionysus-Zagreus. In the Phaedrus, Cassirer points out, Plato argues, in the person of Socrates, that the solution to the problem is not to be found in myth. All knowledge, Socrates says, must begin with self-knowledge and this requires the examination of the self by means of logos. To by-pass logos in favour of the mystical intuitions of the myth-makers is simply to avoid the knowledge of the self and

the problem of good and evil with which the self is confronted. That problem cannot be got at by attempting to give rational explanations of myth.

> But I, Phaedrus, think such explanations are very pretty in general, but are the inventions of a very clever and laborious and not altogether enviable man, for no other reason than because after this he must explain the forms of the Centaurs and then that of the Chimera, and there presses in upon him a whole crowd of such creatures, Gorgons and Pegas, and multitudes of strange, inconceivable, portentous natures. If anyone disbelieves in these, and with a rustic sort of wisdom, undertakes to explain each in accordance with probability he will need a great deal of leisure. But I have no leisure for them at all; and the reason, my friend, is this: I am not yet able, as the Delphic inscription has it, to know myself; so that it seems to me ridiculous, when I do not yet know that, to investigate irrelevant things. And so I dismiss these matters and accepting the customary belief about them, as I was saying just now, I investigate not these things, but myself, to know whether I am a monster more complicated and more furious than Typhon or a gentler and simpler creature, to whom a divine and quiet lot is given by nature.
> (Phaedrus, 229C ff.)

Socrates, here, as in so many other Dialogues, assumes a position of self-ignorance. The ignorance, however, is a pretense necessary to the whole method of dialectic; he uses the guise in much the same manner that any teacher pretends ignorance whenever he asks a question. The purpose of the guise is to draw the student out on the grounds that the knowledge is within him to be drawn out. And, in a skillful teacher like Socrates, the answer is implicit in the very formulation of the question. In the Dialogues there is no doubt concerning the direction in which Socrates' questions are leading. Socrates emerges from Plato's

Dialogues as one who has found truth and now wishes to impart that truth to others by acting as the midwife assisting at its birth.

How did Socrates find truth? For Shelley that answer was to be found in the Symposium: through Diotima, the prophetess. By what method did he find it? Again the answer was clear in the Symposium: by the very method that Socrates would now help others to find it; the method of dialectic. The point that emerges again and again from Plato's Dialogues is the fact that truth cannot be found in the manner of Descartes; it can only be found through intellectual intercourse among men when one among them (Socrates, in the instance of the Dialogues) has already discovered it. The question, of course, can be pushed one step further. Who taught the truth to Diotima so that she could pass it on to Socrates? And precisely at this point the limits of reason have been reached; Plato must revert to myth to provide an answer.

Knowledge, says Plato, is recollection, and proceeds to prove it in the Meno by eliciting from the Greek slave, who was previously ignorant of Geometry, the proof of one of Euclid's theorems. Now this doctrine of knowledge as recollection is explained by the myth of pre-existence. In the Phaedrus, he describes the soul in its previous existence where it had seen the Forms and been so impressed

by the sight of the True, the Beautiful and the Good that ever after she had fallen and become immersed in body, like an oyster in a shell, she still has some recollection of those Forms and is drawn, by the sight of beautiful objects, to them.

The myth that Plato uses in the Phaedrus is a variation of the Orphic myth of Dionysus-Zagreus. Man, in his original divinity, is Dionysus. That divinity, however, has fallen into matter (the devouring of Dionysus by the Titans). Yet even in the form of flesh, man is still aware of the divinity within him and may by the performance of purification rites climaxing in a state of hieromania re-establish his oneness with the god which is the divine form of himself. Plato's theory of knowledge, therefore, rests upon a mythical base.

For Shelley this meant that Plato was admitting that imagination (the intuitive perception of unity) is the real basis of his philosophy and that he is, in essence, a mythopoeic poet. And it is in this respect that Shelley belongs to the tradition of the nineteenth-century Romantic philosophers. The publication of Kant's Critique of Pure Reason was the crisis of the Enlightenment because he showed that reason is limited to phenomena; it cannot deal with noumena (things-in-themselves). What Kant was asserting was precisely what Plato was asserting in turning from

reason to myth; the ultimate answers concerning things-in-themselves are beyond the range of reason. Out of this awareness of the limitation of reason, there emerged the Romantic philosophers concerned to discover the means by which noumena could be penetrated. In feeling and intuition they discovered what they thought was the instrument of penetration. The result was the re-discovery of myth. And the mythical world emerged where it emerges in Plato - at that point where the limits of reason are reached. Cassirer sums up the shift from the Enlightenment to Romanticism. The view of the Enlightenment, he says,

> undergoes a radical change as soon as we pass to the Romantic philosophers. In the system of these philosophers myth becomes not only a subject of the highest intellectual interest but also a subject of awe and veneration. It is regarded as the mainspring of human culture. Art, history and poetry originate in myth. A philosophy which overlooks or neglects this origin is declared to be shallow and inadequate. It is one of the principal aims of Schelling's system to give myth its right and legitimate place in human civilization. In his works we find for the first time a philosophy of mythology side by side with his philosophy of nature, history, and art. Eventually all his interest seems to be concentrated upon this problem. Instead of being the opposite of philosophic thought myth has become its ally; and, in a sense, its consummation.[35]

Myth, for the Romantic philosophers looking back to the Enlightenment, was the expression of a realm above and below consciousness, the revelation of the secret springs of human thought and action. In the evolution of thought those secret springs had been buried beneath a vast rational structure which had achieved its highest form in the Enlightenment. To uncover those springs was to return to the origins in the imagination, and from those

origins recreate human society; hence the revolutionary doctrine implicit or explicit in Romantic philosophy.

This whole attitude to myth as the expression of the unconscious could readily find its justification in Plato's doctrine of pre-existence where the soul was in the actual presence of the Forms and carried the memory-image of them into this world. To the Romantic this simply meant that the ideal world which finds its highest expression in myth lies buried in the unconscious, like, to use Plato's phrase, an oyster in a shell. Once the shell is broken (the hard crust of rationalism) the oyster (the ideal world of myth)will emerge.

In English Romanticism this view of the real dwelling-place of myth developed a curious cult,which may be called the cult of childhood. The child, says Shelley, is to the years what primitive man is to the ages. The world of myth and rite so characteristic of primitive man is also the world of the child. The ideal world is, in a sense, the recovery of the lost childhood in every man. Before examining this view of Shelley's, however, it may be worth while to examine it in its most explicit form in the poetry of Wordsworth.

It is not without significance that Wordsworth in his account of the process of growing updescribes the child in terms of the Platonic and Orphic doctrine of pre-existence.

The child, he says in the "Intimation Ode", is the "mighty prophet," and "the seer blest" because he enters this world "not in utter nakedness" but "trailing clouds of glory" from the world of Forms in which he previously existed in a state of purity, and which he still, in some sense, remembers. In childhood, however, "shades of the prison house" begin to descend upon the growing boy until the glory is lost in the light of common day. Behind this account of childhood lies the Dionysian myth of divinity buried in flesh, just as it lies behind Plato's doctrine of pre-existence.[36] Through the imagination, however, this divinity can be momentarily restored. These moments of restoration, he describes in "Tintern Abbey": they are the gifts of "aspect more sublime"[42] in which, as in the Orphic state of divine madness, "we are laid asleep in body and become a living soul." The eye is made quiet "by the power of harmony and the deep power of joy" (the theme of the choral odes of the Bacchanals in the Bacchae) so that we "see into the life of things." And what precisely is it that is seen? Wordsworth comes closest to an answer in the Prelude:

> ...The unfettered clouds and regions of the Heavens
> Tumult and peace, the darkness and the light -
> Were like the workings of one mind, the features
> Of the same face, blossoms upon one tree;
> Characters of the great Apocalypse,
> The types and symbols of Eternity.
> (VI, 634-39)

What Wordsworth saw then was an augury of restored oneness, a revelation of the lost god (the "mighty prophet") within the self.

Poetry, from this point of view, is the articulation of the inarticulate vision of childhood before the shades of the prison house close in. It is a return to origins, recreating in the adult mind the eternal childhood of the race. For this reason Shelley says that "poetry is connate with the origin of man."[37] And he illustrates this view with reference to both primitive man and the child. Primitive man, he says, dances and sings gaining therefrom an intense and pure pleasure from the "sense of approximation of the eternal order of nature"[38] which these rites provide. What is characteristic of primitive man is also characteristic of the child (for "the savage is to the ages what the child is to years")[39].

> A child at play by itself will express its delight by its voice and motions; and every inflexion of tone and every gesture will bear exact relation to a corresponding antitype in the pleasurable impressions which awakened it; it will be the reflected image of that impression; and as the lyre trembles and sounds after the wind has died away, so the child seeks, by prolonging in its voice and motions the duration of the effect, to prolong also a consciousness of the cause.[40]

In his essay, <u>On Life</u>, Shelley again expresses this view of childhood and follows the Wordsworthian view of the process of growing up.

> Let us recollect our sensations as children. What a distinct and intense apprehension had we of the world and of ourselves! Many of the circumstances of social life were then important to us which are now no longer so. But that

is not the point of comparison on which I mean to insist. We less habitually distinguished all that we saw and felt, from ourselves. They seemed as it were to constitute one mass. There are some persons who, in this respect, are always children. Those who are subject to the state called reverie, feel as if their nature were dissolved into the surrounding universe, or as if the surrounding universe were absorbed into their being. They are conscious of no distinction. And these are states which precede, or accompany, or follow an unusually intense and vivid apprehension of life. As men grow up this power commonly decays, and they become mechanical and habitual agents. Thus feelings and then reasonings are the combined result of a multitude of entangled thoughts, and of a series of what are called impressions, implanted by reiteration.[41]

What Shelley is here describing is the state of <u>participation mystique</u> which is characteristic both of the individual childhood and the racial childhood. Childhood, which is therefore both the individual and racial unconscious of the adult, has within it the archetypal patterns of myth lost to consciousness in the process of growing up and yet capable of being reclaimed by the "visitations of the divinity in Man."[42] Shelley's discovery of the Dionysian myth was not so much, therefore, an influence as an explanation of an activity within his own unconscious. It was the psychic realm with which he was confronted in the act of creation and which as a "votary of Reason" he had rejected. When, therefore, Shelley presents himself not as a man "abandoned to the sudden reflux of the influences under which others habitually live",[43] but as a poet "redeeming from decay the visitations of the divinity in Man",[44] he emerges as Dionysus, "the pard-like spirit beautiful and

swift ."

> His head was bound with pansies overblown,
> And faded violets, white, and pied, and blue;
> And a light spear tipped with a cypress cone,
> Round whose rude shaft dark ivy-tresses grew.
> (Adonais, 289-92.)

Shelley considered Adonais "perhaps better in point of composition than anything I have written."[45] It presented him at the height of his powers, at a time when his creative vision had achieved that ultimate form toward which his powers were tending. The poem, however, is both a climax and a crisis for Shelley. In his image of the "dome of many-coloured glass" he recognized that however beautiful the image of the One in poetry may be, it is only an image and as such "stains the white radiance of eternity". The conclusion was inevitable: "Die,/ If thou wouldst be with that which thou dost seek". Such a conclusion meant the rejection of the image and with the rejection of the image, the rejection of the poet. "The deep truth is imageless" (II, iv, 116) he had said in Prometheus Unbound; the realization as a conscious being of this intuition beyond the reach of consciousness was beginning to dawn upon him. In his last incompleted poem, The Triumph of Life, Shelley saw all the heroes of his lifetime trapped on the wheel of life; only two, both of them martyrs who presented their vision and "fled back like eagles to their native noon" (131) remained companions to

his thoughts: Socrates and Christ. The real apocalypse was not the vision of an ideal world, the vision of the community of life created by the imagination, but the visionless world beyond imagination - the God without creation standing alone in the void. The other was but an "augury" of the ultimate apocalpse. Not eternity, but the "moving image of eternity"[46] was the best that Plato's Demi-urge could shape. And it was the limit of poetry as well. All his life Shelley, in poetry, had tried to outreach the limitations of what was inherently limited. Speaking of that invisible influence that quickens the poet's imagination, he says in A Defense of Poetry:

> Could this influence be durable in its original purity and force, it is impossible to predict the greatness of the results; but when composition begins, inspiration is already on the decline, and the most glorious poetry that has ever been communicated to the world is probably a feeble shadow of the original conception of the Poet.[47]

To understand this last insight of Shelley's, it is necessary to pick up the thread of Plato's argument where it was left. Plato was reaching for a truth beyond the image. While it is true that Plato did revert to myth in order to provide an answer for those questions which could not be answered within the limits of reason, he was careful to explain what he meant by myth. Shelley, as it were, failed to wait for an answer. He plunged in and proclaimed, along with the philosophers of the Romantic movement, that myth was a revelation of ultimate truth.

And his Platonic justification was to be found in both the Ion and the Timaeus. What Plato said of the creation myth in the Timaeus, however, was that it was a "likely account". And it is a "likely account" because no true account is possible.

No where in his philosophy does Plato attempt to present the object of truth as such. His whole concern as a philosopher is to present the method by which true knowledge of that object may be attained. There is a real distinction, however, between knowledge of the object and the object of knowledge. In his seventh Epistle, Plato makes this fact clear:

> One statement at any rate I can make in regard to all who have written or who may write with a claim to knowledge of the subjects to which I devote myself no matter how they pretend to have acquired it, whether from my instruction or from others or by their own discovery. Such writers can in my opinion have no real acquaintance with the subject. I certainly have composed no work in regard to it, nor shall I ever do so in future, for there is no way of putting it into words like other studies. Acquaintance with it must come rather after a long period of attendance or instruction in the subject itself and of close acquaintance when suddenly like a blaze kindled by a leaping spark, it is generated in the soul and at once becomes self-sustaining. (341C-341D)

The subject to which he devotes himself and about which he has never written he goes on to explain: it is the actual object of knowledge as distinct from knowledge of the object. Of one thing Plato is quite certain: dialectic may provide knowledge of the object one is after, but it does not provide the seeker with the object itself. The question then

is: can the actual object be attained? Plato's answer is in the affirmative, although, as he says, he has written no work about it. Nevertheless, wordless and silent, "it is generated in the soul and at once becomes self-sustaining."

This generation in the soul is the true hieromania of Orphism in which the soul's object is attained. Plato, then, is not altogether ironic when he speaks of "divine madness" for, properly understood, it is the soul's attainment of its object. That the poets have generated this object in their own souls, he is quite willing to concede. So far, therefore, Shelley in his view of Plato appears to be on solid ground. Yet, without doubt, Shelley is precisely the type of poet that Plato would expel from his Republic. And the reason is that, while Plato does not reject the experience of the poet, he does reject the myth-maker. And in Greece the two were inseparable; the poet, in his very nature, was a creator or maker of myths.

Poets write in a state of "divine madness" having, being bereft of reason, no knowledge of what they are writing about. They argue, therefore, and the citizens accept, that what they write is the revelation of the god. And here Plato and the poets part company. What they experience, Plato argues, may be the revelation of the god, but what they write is that experience seen, to use Shelley's

phrase, through a "dome of many-coloured glass.". What is given, therefore, to the reader is not the "white radiance" but its reflection. The poets fail to make this distinction; instead of presenting what is so obviously a "likely account" they present what they think to be, or those who read it think to be, the object itself. It is as if the Demi-urge identified the world he creates with the model upon which it was created so that no distinction whatsoever remains between them. The result is that poets delude and thereby undermine the search for the object of truth by presenting a false one. Cassirer's explanation of Plato's expulsion of poets from his Republic provides some support for this point of view:

> What is combated and rejected by Plato is not poetry in itself, but the myth-making function. To him and to every other Greek both things were inseparable. From time immemorial the poets had been the real myth-makers. As Herodotus said, Homer and Hesiod had made the generations of the gods; they have portrayed their shapes and distinguished their offices and powers. Here was the real danger for the Platonic Republic. To admit poetry meant to admit myth, but myth could not be admitted without frustrating all philosophical efforts and undermining the very foundations of Plato's state. Only by expelling the poets from the ideal state could the philosopher's state be protected against the intrusion of subversive hostile forces.[48]

Here, then, in Plato's attitude to myth is the explanation of the last brief phase of Shelley's career. He too came to realize that "the deep truth is imageless." In the last stanza of Adonais he is "borne darkly, fearfully afar," following the soul of Adonais, which "like a star/

Beacons from the abode where the Eternal are". There is, for the poet, Shelley realized in the Triumph of Life, the danger of being destroyed by his own vision if that vision becomes for the poet the object itself.

If myth is the transfiguration of the world created by the discursive reason, then death is the transfiguration of both. But that ultimate transfiguration, which is the object of apocalypse, can only be presented in the moving image of it such as Prometheus Unbound reveals.

Chapter 3

SHELLEY'S DOCTRINE OF EROS

The Dionysian character of Shelley's apocalyptic vision explains the presence of a scheme of salvation in his poetry which, since Christianity's first encounter with the pagan world, has been its foremost foe and rival. Salvation, in the Orphic religion, lies in the recovery of the lost god within the self, man's re-assumption of his divinity. From the Orphic point of view man is god. Insofar as Shelley was concerned, as an apocalyptic poet, to metamorphose fallen man into a god, his poetry, viewed in Christian terms, is heretical. In what follows some attempt will be made to examine the nature of the heresy and to arrive at some definition concerning Shelley's religion.

Shelley was, throughout his career, the implacable foe of orthodox Christianity. In 1812, his opposition to Christianity included Christ himself.[1] As his own vision clarified, however, his conception of Christ changed until He became an object of veneration, one of the greatest,

human spirits the world has ever failed to know. However, this vision of Christ, as will be shown, is thoroughly heretical; in Shelley's view, He is a Dionysian hero.

The view of the creative imagination which Shelley presents is the logical starting point for an examination of his religion. The imagination, he says, is that faculty in man whereby, out of the ruins of his fallen self, he re-shapes and re-creates his own inherent divinity. Viewed in terms of Christian orthodoxy, therefore, the imagination is a daemonic (in the Christian rather than the Greek sense) force that would persuade man that he is God. This conception of the imagination is found in the New Testament. Paul, for example, in his Epistle to the Romans condemns the vanity of imagination because it leads men to assert that God is created in their image.

> Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were they thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man.
>
> (I:21-23.)

The Church Fathers were even more explicit in their condemnation of this daemonic influence at work in men. In the Orphic rites, the purpose of which was the recovery of lost divinity, they saw the worship of the Devil. "The Bacchoi", says Clement,

hold orgies in honour of mad Dionysus, they celebrate a

divine madness by Eating of Raw Flesh [a reference to the devouring of a bull, the form in which Dionysus had been slain by the Titans], the final accomplishment of their rite is the distribution of the flesh of the butchered victims, they are crowned with snakes, and shriek out the name ofEva, that Eve through which sin came into the world, and the symbol of the Bacchic orgies is a consecrated serpent.[2]

Clement is here describing the Maenads who, as in Euripides' Bacchae, weave serpents through their hair and cry out "Evoe", the name of the Evian god which became one of the names of Dionysus. One of the animal forms of Dionysus was the snake. When he was re-born from the thigh of Zeus, the god wound living serpents around his horned head. The significance of the snake in the worship of Dionysus is evident from Miss Harrison's account of the snake as the spiritual form of the hero in primitive society. When the hero dies and is placed in his tomb, Miss Harrison says, he assumes the form of a serpent.[3] In Orphism the body itself is viewed as a tomb in which the god (the spiritual form of man) lies buried. Hence the snake was associated with Dionysus and Zeus's binding of his head with serpents denotes his rebirth.

As might be expected, this conception of the serpent symbol finds its way into Shelley's poetry. "Among the Greeks the Serpent", says Shelley in his essay On the Devil, and Devils, "was considered as an auspicious and favorable

being. He attended on Aesculapius and Apollo. In Egypt the Serpent was a hieroglyphic of eternity."[4] This view of the serpent is evident in The Revolt of Islam where the struggle between the forces of good and evil are symbolized in the first Canto by a battle between an eagle and a serpent. The serpent, "hieroglyphic of eternity" and symbol of man's ultimate victory over the forces of evil, comes to Cythna in answer to her song (for the language was "his native tongue and hers") and coils itself in her embrace. The serpent here is the spirit form of Cythna depicting her role in the poem as the instigator of a bloodless revolution against the forces of darkness.

The serpent then is, for Shelley, a symbol of re-birth and, as such, is associated with the shaping power of the creative imagination because the imagination is the faculty by which man reassumes his divine form. The consecrated serpent performs the same symbolic function in his poetry as it does in the Orphic rites or re-birth. His description of Cythna with a serpent coiled about her breast finds its counterpart in the Macedonian and Greek figures of Maenads with their entwined serpents.[5]

That Satan in the temptation of Eve in Milton's Paradise Lost should assume the form of a serpent made complete sense to Shelley. Satan persuades Eve to eat of the Tree of Good and Evil by telling her that she will, as

a result of eating the fruit, assume divinity. To assume divinity was, of course, to re-assume man's proper place so far as Shelley was concerned. Since the imagination is the creative power by which this re-assumption takes place, the use of the serpent symbol for the temptation of Eve fitted Shelley's Dionysian conception.

As a Dionysian poet, Shelley believed that Satan was the real hero of Paradise Lost. To what extent did he believe that Milton also thought so? In his essay On the Devil, and Devils, he suggests the possibility that Milton was not a Christian at the time he composed the epic, for, had he been a Christian he could not, in all likelihood, have written it.

> The writer who would have attributed majesty and beauty to the character of victorious and vindictive omnipotence, must have been contented with the character of a good Christian; he never could have been a great epic poet. It is difficult to determine, in a country where the most enormous sanctions of opinion and law are attached to a direct avowal of certain speculative notions, whether Milton was a Christian or not, at the period of the composition of Paradise Lost.... Thus much is certain that Milton gives the Devil all imaginable advantage; and the arguments with which he exposes the injustice and impotent weakness of his adversary are such as had they been printed, distinct from the shelter of any dramatic order, would have been answered by the most conclusive of syllogisms - persecution.[6]

What Shelley is saying here of Milton, he says elsewhere of other poets. To some extent every poet is the expression of his age and therefore of those oppressive superstitions by which it is bounded. These superstitions,

however, are but the thin veil of circumstance which the poet wears as a mask or mantle to hide, as it were, his real intention. Had he dared to remove the disguise so that his intuitive perception stood forth in its naked purity the vision would be too dazzling to contemplate.

But a poet considers the vices of his contemporaries as a temporary dress in which his creations must be arrayed, and which cover without concealing the eternal proportions of their beauty. An epic or dramatic personage is understood to wear them around his soul, as he may the antient armour or the modern uniform around his body; whilst it is easy to conceive a dress more graceful than either. The beauty of the internal nature cannot be so far concealed by its accidental vesture, but that the spirit of its form shall communicate itself to the very disguise, and indicate the shape it hides from the manner in which it is worn. A majestic form and graceful motions will express themselves through the most barbarous and tasteless costume. Few poets of the highest order have chosen to exhibit the beauty of their conceptions in its naked truth and splendour; and it is doubtful whether the alloy of costume, habit, &c., be not necessary to temper this planetary music for mortal ears.[7]

Among these "poets of the highest order" Shelley included Christ. By that peculiar fusing power of imaginative perception in which individual forms participate in archetypal form, the figure of Christ merges with the figure of Satan. In Prometheus Unbound, for example, Shelley quite explicitly identifies his Prometheus with Christ and Satan. Prometheus is the Christ-figure released from the restrictions of Christian orthodoxy, and, at the same time, a purified Satan.

Milton's Satan, according to Shelley, is the real hero of the epic because of the justice of his cause in

attempting to overthrow the tyranny of Heaven. The God of Milton's poem is the vengeful Jehovah of the Old Testament and the role of Satan is that of a liberator. And this is precisely the role of the New Testament Christ. Not only is there an identity between the two figures in terms of function; there is also an identity in terms of method of presentation which Milton uses in presenting Satan and Christ uses in presenting His doctrines. Milton, says Shelley, was required, by virtue of the prevalent opinion legally upheld in his own day, to disguise his real intention by an apparent acquiescence to the popular forms of belief. Christ also wears the mask of orthodoxy in his appeal to the Jewish people.

> Jesus Christ did what every other reformer who has produced any considerable effect upon the world has done. He accommodated his doctrines to the prepossessions of those whom he addressed. He used a language for this view sufficiently familiar to our comprehensions. He said -- However new or strange my doctrines may appear to you, they are, in fact only the restoration and reestablishment of those original institutions and ancient customs of your own law and religion.... Thus like a skilful orator (see Cicero de Oratore), he secures the prejudices of his auditors, and induces them by his professions of sympathy with their feelings to enter with a willing mind into the exposition of his own.... All reformers have been compelled to practise this misrepresentation of their own true feelings and opinions. It is deeply to be lamented that a word should ever issue from human lips which contains the minutest alloy of dissimulation, or simulation, or hypocrisy, or exaggeration, or anything but the precise and rigid image which is present to the mind, and which ought to dictate the expression. But this practise of entire sincerity towards other men would avail to no good end, if they were incapable of practising it towards their own minds.[8]

Having pointed out that Christ, like all great poets, was practised in the necessary art of misrepresentation in order that his real intention might be communicated at all, he then goes on to say that Christ rejected the vengeful Jehovah of the Old Testament on grounds that recall Satan's defiance of God in Paradise Lost.

The conclusion of the speech is in a strain of most daring and most impassioned speculation. He seems emboldened by the success of his exculpation to the multitude to declare in public the utmost singularity of his faith. He tramples upon all received opinions, on all the cherished luxuries and superstitions of mankind. He bids them cast aside the claims of custom and blind faith by which they have been encompassed from the very cradle of their being, and become the imitators and ministers of the Universal God.[9]

Nor do the parallels cease at this point. Milton, he says, was "deeply penetrated with the antient religion of the civilized world".[10] By "antient religion", he, judging from the context, refers to the religion of Greece for he is here associating Milton with Dante who was the "Lucifer of that starry flock" presiding over the "resurrection of learning".[11] Christ too was the inheritor of this ancient religion:

Plato, following the doctrines of Timaeus and Pythagoras, taught also a moral and intellectual system of doctrine, comprehending at once the past, the present, and the future condition of man. Jesus Christ divulged the sacred and eternal truths contained in these views to mankind, and Christianity, in its abstract purity, became the exoteric expression of the esoteric doctrines of the poetry and wisdom of antiquity.[12]

Finally, Milton, as a poet, experienced those "visitations of the divinity in Man" which quickened his powers. In speaking of the source of Christ's inspiration, Shelley says that it derives from the same source that inspired Milton:

> God, it has been asserted, was contemplated by Jesus Christ as every poet and every philosopher must have contemplated that mysterious principle.... There is a power by which we are surrounded, like the atmosphere in which some motionless lyre is suspended, which visits with its breath our silent chords, at will.... This power is God. And those who have seen God, have in the period of their purer and more perfect nature been harmonized by their own will to so exquisite a consentaneity of powers as to give forth divinest melody when the breath of universal being sweeps over their frame.[13]

The archetypal identity of Christ and Satan, when stripped of the armour of orthodoxy, merges with Shelley's Prometheus. In the conflict between Prometheus and Jupiter resulting in the ultimate victory of Prometheus is presented both Shelley's interpretation of Christ's rejection of the Old Testament Jehovah and the realized form of Satan's struggle with God. Milton, Shelley believed, was restricted in the presentation of his vision of the epic struggle between Satan andGod. Because he could not give the ultimate victory to Satan, it was necessary for him to encumber Satan with those vices which would dramatically justify his defeat. These vices Shelley removed from Prometheus, substituting for them the virtues of love and forgiveness which properly belonged to the

figure of Christ.

> The only imaginary being resembling in any degree Prometheus, is Satan; and Prometheus is, in my judgement a more poetical character than Satan, because, in addition to courage, and majesty, and firm and patient opposition to omnipotent force, he is susceptible of being described as exempt from the taints of ambition, envy, revenge, and a desire for personal aggrandisement, which, in the Hero of Paradise Lost, interfere with the interest. The character of Satan engenders in the mind a pernicious casuistry which leads us to weigh his faults with his wrongs, and to excuse the former because the latter exceed all measure. In the minds of those who consider that magnificent fiction with a religious feeling it engenders something worse. But Prometheus is, as it were, the type of the highest perfection of moral and intellectual nature, impelled by the purest and truest motives to the best and noblest ends.[14]

The imperfect realization of Satan in Paradise Lost was, for Shelley, indicative of the weakness of the poem as a whole. What he found in Milton's epic was an arrested vision of man's divinity. The poem finds its centre not in an apocalypse but in a fall. The whole purpose of the visionary poet is to recreate, out of the ruins of that fall (which is the world of a paralysed subject confronting a universe of fixed objects), man's original divinity. Milton's God, like Shelley's Jupiter, is the archetypal image of the fallen world. Had the apocalyptic vision been realized within the poem, this image of God would have been transfigured by the shaping power of Milton's imagination so that, like Shelley's Jupiter, He would completely disappear, and the re-born Satan, freed from the tyranny of an external omnipotence, emerge puri-

fied and victorious. Prometheus, like Satan, is the victim of an external god so long as his inner being mirrors that figure of vengeance and wrath. Not until Prometheus recalls his curse and replaces it with forgiveness is he freed of the Jupiter figure within himself. This inner transformation is what distinguishes Shelley's Prometheus from Milton's Satan; hence Shelley considered his Prometheus a "more poetical figure". The change in Prometheus constitutes an internal apocalypse which then finds its objective counterpart in the reunion of Asia and the hero.

In terms of the contrast between the two poems, it is possible to define Shelley's opposition to orthodox Christianity. The God of the theologians and Christian institutions, Shelley believed, was the archetypal image of the fallen world. "Every epoch", says Shelley, "under names more or less specious, has deified its peculiar errors".[15] The theological, institutional God of Christianity is just such a deification and He finds His place in Milton's poem because "a poet considers the vices of his contemporaries as the temporary dress in which his creations must be arrayed".[16] The consolidation of this perverted vision of God ("the Mammon of the world"[17] or deification of "the principle of Self[18]") is to be found in the Old Testament image of Jehovah. Christ came into

the world to destroy the image and replace it with a genuine poetic vision of the divinity in man. "The perfection of the human and the divine character is thus asserted to be the same", says Shelley of Christ's vision of God. "God is a model through which the excellence of man is to be estimated, whilst the abstract perfection of the human character is the type of the actual perfection of the divine."[19] Against this conception of God, the Hebrew and Roman world rose in revolt and put the visionary poet to death. The death of Christ, type of all activity on the part of fallen man, soon became a central symbol in Christianity so that the God the Christians worship is a dead God upon the dead Tree of Life. This worship, says Shelley, is nothing more than the worship of the "principle of self". It is the rejection of vision and imagination.

Christianity, from Shelley's point of view, was the consolidated form of the fallen world. Its counterpart in his own poetry is the image of Prometheus bound to a precipice of icy rocks. To the Christians, the crucifixion of Christ was directly attributable to God Who offered Him as a vicarious atonement for man's rebellion, in the archetypal form of Adam, against His decree. The people, therefore, who actually performed this human sacrifice by condemning Christ to die upon the cross and then

carrying it out, were acting under the instructions of their God. The purpose of the act, Shelley believed, was to perpetuate the worship of Jehovah (and therefore error) by annihilating those visionaries who would dare to usurp His power. Far from being a redemptive act, its purpose was to destroy all possibility of redemption through the annihilation of man's creative faculty. Hence the identification of the serpent with evil when, in reality, its proper symbolic function was that of a "hieroglyphic of eternity.". "The Christians," says Shelley, "have turned this Serpent into their Devil [the invention of the writers of the Bible], and accommodated the whole story to their new scheme of sin and propitiation, &c."[20]

The myth of Prometheus, essentially Dionysian in its spirit and form, had an obvious attraction for Shelley, for here was a mythical hero who dared to challenge the authority of the gods by stealing their fire (symbol of creative power) and giving it to men.[21] The concept of original sin, therefore, takes on an entirely different significance in the Promethean myth. Sin, as rebellion against God, becomes a virtue. The suffering that results from rebellion is no longer simply punishment that must lead men ultimately to bend the knee and "sue for grace," but the inner struggle toward re-creation. The pain endured is the labour of birth. Man's emergence from Eden,

from this point of view, is the emergence from the womb into life. Satan in the womb of Eden, like the hero in the tomb, takes the form of the serpent as a symbol of man's immortality realized through the re-creating power of the imagination. Nietzsche's discussion of the Promethean myth in relation to the Hebraic myth of Adam and Eve provides a fair summing up of Shelley's position with relation to Christianity.

> The tale of Prometheus is an original possession of the entire Aryan race, and is documentary evidence of its capacity for the profoundly tragic, indeed, it is not entirely improbable that this myth has the same characteristic significance for the Aryan race that the myth of the fall of man has for the Semitic, and that there is a relationship between the two myths like that of brother and sister. The presupposition of the Promethean myth is the transcendent value which a naive humanity attach to fire as the true palladium of every ascending culture: that man should dispose at will of this fire, and should not receive it only as a gift from Heaven, as the igniting lightning or the warming solar flame, appeared to the contemplative primordial men as crime and robbery of the divine nature. And thus the first philosophical problem at once causes a painful, irreconcilable antagonism between man and god, and puts as it were a mass of rock at the gate of every culture. The best and highest that men can acquire they obtain by crime, and must now take upon themselves its consequences, namely the whole flood of suffering and sorrows with which the offended celestials must visit the nobly aspiring race of man: a bitter reflection which, by the dignity it confers on crime, contrasts strangely with the Semitic myth of the fall of man, in which curiosity, beguilement, seducibility, wantonness - in short, a whole series of pre-eminently feminine passions - were regarded as the origin of evil. What distinguishes the Aryan representation is the sublime view of active sin as the properly Promethean virtue.[22]

Nietzsche's distinction between the Aryan and Semitic traditions suggests the sort of imaginative transplanting of Christ out of one tradition into another that Shel-

ley performs. While Christ poses as one who has come to fulfil the laws of the prophets, in reality He is attacking those conceptions to which the Jewish people have been accustomed "from the very cradle of their being."[23] Inspired and emboldened by His apparent success in placating His audience, He then goes on to present the "utmost singularity of his faith." That singularity, judging from what Shelley has to say in A Defense of Poetry, lies in the fact that "Christianity, in its abstract purity, became the exoteric expression of the esoteric doctrines of the poetry and wisdom of antiquity."[24] And the specific doctrines that he refers to are the "doctrines of Timaeus and Pythagoras"[25] which found their way into the philosophy of Plato. The tradition that Christ belongs to, therefore, is the esoteric tradition which may be loosely described as Orphic.

The similarities between the religion of the Orphics and the Pythagoreans are so marked that Willamowitz, in Der Glaube der Hellenen, says that it is unnecessary to make specific references to the Orphics since their system is entirely Pythagorean.[26] Perhaps the only really significant difference is the Pythagorean emphasis upon mathematics. But even here Guthrie says that Pythagoras's presentation of his cosmogony in terms of numerical ratios (which Plato uses in the Timaeus) is simply the counterpart

of the Orphic mythical account.[27] Shelley too, in at least one instance, groups the Pythagoreans and the Orphics together when discussing the virtues of vegetarian diet. Both groups share all their basic beliefs in common: the dualism of body and soul, the belief in transmigration and the circle of birth, the importance of purification (especially abstinence from animal flesh), and the mystical power of music as reflecting the harmony of the universe, thereby creating an inner harmony to match it.

Shelley's own account of Christ's doctrines are to be found in his Essay on Christianity written in 1815. While his own vision of Christ was to undergo further clarification, yet it is possible to see in Shelley's conception of Christ in 1815 the mythical poet presenting His vision of the community of life which man, through purification, is able to enjoy:

> The universal Harmony or Reason which makes your passive frame of thought its dwelling in proportion to the purity and majesty of its nature, will instruct you if ye are willing to attain that exalted condition, in what manner to possess all the objects necessary for your material subsistence. All men are invocated to become thus pure and happy. All men are called to participation in the community of nature's gifts. The man who has fewest bodily wants approaches nearest to the divine nature.... The mighty frame of the wonderful and lovely world is the food of your contemplation, and living beings who resemble your own nature and are bound to you by similarity of sensations are destined to be the nutriment of your affections: united they are the consummation of the widest hopes your mind can contain.... By rendering yourselves thus worthy, ye will be as free in your imaginations as the swift and many-coloured fowls of the air, and as beautiful in pure simplicity as the lilies of the field.[28]

Such, according to Shelley, was the substance of Christ's teachings. It is the perfect Pythagorean solution to the problem of existence. And it might also have come from the lips of Orpheus.

In European literature the most characteristic poetic expression of Christ's teachings (especially His teaching concerning love) is to be found, Shelley says, in the courtly love tradition which finds its purest utterance in Dante's love for Beatrice. Shelley's account of the emergence of this tradition shows again the transplanting of Christ's teachings from a Semitic to an Aryan <u>milieu</u>. Having pointed out that His doctrines were the "exoteric expression of the esoteric doctrines of the poetry and wisdom of antiquity", he goes on to add that in the emergence of Christianity Christ's teachings fused with the mythology of the Celtic nations.

> The incorporation of the Celtic nations with the exhausted population of the south, impressed upon it [the poetry of Christ's doctrines] the figure of the poetry existing in their mythology and institutions. The result was a sum of the action and reaction of all the causes included in it; for it may be assumed as a maxim that no nation or religion can supersede any other without incorporating into itself a portion of that which it supersedes. The abolition of personal and domestic slavery, and the emancipation of women from a great part of the degrading restraints of antiquity, were among the consequences of these events.[29]

What Shelley is here implying is that Christ's teaching of human equality liberated women so that the ideal love of the <u>Symposium</u> could now become the expression of the

spiritual relationship between man and woman.

> It was not until the eleventh century that the effects of the poetry of the Christian and Chivalric systems began to manifest themselves.... Love became a religion, the idols of whose worship were ever present. It was as if the statues of Apollo and the Muses had been endowed with life and motion, and had walked forth among their worshippers; so that the earth became peopled by the inhabitants of a diviner world. The familiar appearance and proceedings of life became wonderful and heavenly; and a paradise was created as out of the wrecks of Eden .... Love, which found a worthy poet in Plato alone of all the antients, has been celebrated by a chorus of the greatest writers of the renovated world; and the music has penetrated the caverns of society, and its echoes still drown the dissonance of arms and superstitions.[30]

The love of which Shelley here speaks is generally recognized as completely pagan in spirit. "The spirit of chivalry as it took shape in the love lyrics of the provencals and the Arthurian and other romances was itself a spirit of revolt," says Grierson, "a revolt of the secular spirit of man against the long pre-occupation with theological and ascetic ideals.... In Romantic poetry the spirit of man found an outlet for feelings that Christianity condemned and strove to repress, for ideals which the church might and did strive to annex and to modify, but which are essentially anti-Christian."[31] And C. S. Lewis, in <u>The Allegory of Love</u>, says much the same thing: the literature of the Troubadours is essentially foreign to the Christian conception of love, and arose as a rival or parody of the real religion which brought out the antagonism of the two ideals.[32]

It is, on the other hand, Denis de Rougemont's analysis of the origins of the religion of Love that comes closest to Shelley's interpretation. In Love in the Western World, he examines the tradition of Eros all the way from its origins to the nineteenth century. The origin, he says, lies in the mystery religions. The doctrine of Eros in Plato's philosophy has its antecedents in Orphism, and while there is in his philosophy a movement from mythos to logos, the very reverse takes place in European culture. Platonism entered Europe as esoteric wisdom and, with the forcing of Christianity upon the peoples of the West at the time of Constantine and under the Carolingian emperors, this esoteric wisdom, released from the discipline of dialectic, became an underground movement and flourished "in the guise of secret heresies more or less orthodox in appearance."[33] This underground heretical movement was encouraged by the invasion of the Celts who brought with them their own Aryan type of religion.

The close approximation of this account to Shelley's is evident. De Rougemont is condemning a tradition in European poetry of which Shelley is one of the chief defenders and practitioners. Into the category of "secret heresies more or less orthodox in appearance" Shelley would place the two great Christian epics, Milton's Paradise

Lost and Dante's Divine Comedy. The former poem has already been examined from this point of view, and, while Shelley is not so explicit about Dante's Divine Comedy, it is quite evident that he thought the poem equally heretical.

> The distorted notions of invisible things which Dante and his rival Milton have idealised, are merely the mask and the mantle in which these great poets walk through eternity enveloped and disguised. It is a difficult question to determine how far they were conscious of the distinction which must have subsisted in their minds between their own creeds and that of the people. Dante at least appears to mark the full extent of it by placing Riphaeus, whom Virgil calls justissimus unus, in Paradise, and observing a most heretical caprice in his distribution of rewards and punishments.[34]

Shelley, however, does not stop with Dante and Milton; Christ, Himself, is a heretical figure viewed from the angle of orthodoxy.

The opposition betweenShelley's conception of love and that of orthodox Christianity lies in the difference between Eros and Agape. The distinction between these two concepts of love will serve to clarify further Shelley's opposition to Christianity and, at the same time, his view of the apocalypse.

The Christian concept of Agape[35] takes for its premise the fact of original sin. Having, by an act of deliberate disobedience, chosen to separate himself from God, man is incapable of engendering within himself that love for God by which the breach may be healed. He cannot,

on the basis of his own initiative alone, hope to re-assemble his own psychic forces and re-direct them from a love of self to a love of God. To suggest that man, of himself, can "regain the blissful seat" is to be the victim of pride and find in Satan's attempt in Paradise Lost the type or pattern or his own efforts. This being man's condition as a result of the fall, the initiative, if he is to be redeemed, must be taken by God. The whole meaning of the New Testament, from this point of view, is the evidence in Christ of God's initiative. This initiative is taken because it is the nature of God to love; it is altogether independent of man's worthiness or unworthiness to be loved. It is indifferent to human merit.

By virtue of Agape man is given new life in precisely the way that life was originally given, as a result of a creative act on the part of God. "And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul." (Genesis 2, 1). In the presence of Agape man is as dust; the breath of life that changes that dust into a living soul is not the result of a property inherent in the dust itself, but a divine bestowal from without that changes its very nature. Hence for the converted Paul, it is not he who lives but Christ who lives within him. And Christ lives within him because God, out of His grace,

placed Him there by descending Himself to dust.

In the pagan conception of Eros, on the other hand, the Divinity that lives within man is his own archetypal form. The Christian belief in incarnation in which God assumes the form of flesh is, from the point of view of Eros, not the first act of the drama of redemption, but the last act of the drama of the fall. This fact is clear from an examination of the myth of Dionysus-Zagreus. In the myth, Eros is the first creation of Dionysus, the Dionysus-Phanes "with the golden wings on his shoulders, four eyes and the heads of various animals." This same Dionysus, in his second birth is Dionysus-Zagreus who is devoured by the Titans. Out of the ashes of the Titans, whom Zeus destroyed for devouring his son, was created the race of men. The descent, therefore, of Dionysus into the form of flesh is an account of man's condition in his present fallen state.

The second act of the drama of the redemption is the crucifixion of Christ. The counterpart of this redeeming act in the Orphic myth is the devouring of the god by the Titans, which again symbolizes not the rebirth of man, but the fall of archetypal man. In other words, the Christian drama of salvation is the Orphic drama of the fall.

The point where Christianity and Orphism come closest to agreement is in the resurrection of Christ. The counter-

part of the resurrection in Orphism is man's re-assumption, through rites of purification, of his inherent divinity. This re-assumption, however, is an event possible in the here and now. The resurrection of Christ, on the other hand, is what Paul calls the "first fruits" of the revelation. It pertains to Christ alone during His dispensation; only with His return will all believers be resurrected and assume a spiritual body. The resurrection, therefore, is a fact in Christ and a hope in Christians. In Orphism it is the fact in all men, that is, a hope capable of immediate fulfilment.

On the basis of these radical differences between the Agape and Eros dramas it is possible to discover not only the opposition between two views of man, but also of two views of matter. Matter from the Christian point of view is good; from the Orphic point of view it is evil. The Christian concept of a spiritual body suggests that Christ came not only to redeem the soul but also to redeem the flesh. The dualism of flesh and spirit, the central struggle within the Orphic drama, is present also in the Christian drama, but in a very different sense. Flesh in itself is not evil; it has not the curse of the Titans upon it. It is evil only if it comes between man and his consciousness of God. Since it belongs to a lower order of creation, it must be subject to the higher order which

is the living soul created to worship God and have dominion over all other created things.

For the Orphics, as for Plato, evil is inherent in matter and is therefore never entirely susceptible to the shaping power of spirit. The Demi-urge is limited in the expression of its creative power. Out of matter it cannot create things-in-themselves but only the appearance - and an imperfect one at that - of things-in-themselves. The image of reality, by virtue of being an image (and therefore rooted in, or dependent on, the senses), partakes of the nature of evil. No matter how refined the image, how symbolic it may be of ultimate reality, it must stain "the white radiance of Eternity".

Plato makes this fact clear in the Symposium. In his account of man's ascent to the contemplation of the Form of Beauty he uses the image of a ladder. This ladder, as C. S. Lewis points out, is a ladder in the real sense; every step requires removing oneself from the rung immediately below it. To attain to the ultimate goal toward which Eros leads requires the loss of the sensible world entirely, for it subsists in itself and in no other thing which seeks to participate in it.

It is eternal, unproduced, indestructible; neither subject to increase nor decay: not, like other things, partly beautiful and partly deformed; not at one time beautiful and another time not; not beautiful in relation to one thing and deformed in relation to another... nor can this supreme beauty be figured to the imagination like a

beautiful face, or beautiful hands, or any portion of the body, nor like any discourse, nor any science. Nor does it subsist in any other that lives or is, either in earth, or in heaven, or in any other place; but it is eternally uniform and consistent, and monoeidic with itself. All other things are beautiful through a participation of it, with this condition, that although they are subject to production and decay, it never becomes more or less, or endures any change. When any one, ascending from a correct system of Love, begins to contemplate this supreme beauty, he already touches the consummation of his labour. For such as discipline themselves upon this system, or are conducted by another, beginning to ascend through these transitory objects which are beautiful, towards that which is beauty itself, proceeding as on steps from the love of one form to that of two, and from that of two, to that of all forms which are beautiful; and from beautiful forms to beautiful habits and institutions, and from institutions to beautiful doctrines; until, from the mediation of many doctrines, they arrive at that which is nothing else than the doctrine of the supreme beauty itself, in the knowledge and contemplation of which at length they repose.

'Such a life as this, my dear Socrates,' exclaimed the stranger Prophetess, 'spent in the contemplation of the beautiful, is the life for men to love; which if you chance ever to experience, you will esteem far beyond gold and rich garments, and even those lovely persons whom you and many others now gaze on with astonishment, and are prepared neither to eat nor drink so that you may behold and live forever with these objects of your love! What then shall we imagine to be the aspect of the supreme beauty itself, simple, pure, uncontaminated with the intermixture of human flesh and colours, and all other idle and unreal shapes attendant on mortality; the divine, the original, the supreme, the self-consistent, the monoeidic beautiful itself? What must be the life of him who dwells with and gazes on that which it becomes us all to seek? Think you not that to him alone is accorded the prerogative of bringing forth, not images and shadows of virtue, for he is in contact not with a shadow but with reality; with virtue itself, in the production and nourishment of which he becomes dear to the Gods, and if such a privilege is conceded to any human being, himself immortal.'[36]

The soul's contemplation of the Beauty in itself is the goal of Eros. Behind this notion of the ladder, describing the soul's journey of ascent from sensible forms to

the supersensible, is Plato's doctrine of pre-existence and true knowledge as a recollection of it. And it is precisely in these terms that Eros is defined by both Nygren (Agape and Eros) and de Rougemont (Love in the Western World). Eros, says Nygren, "is man's conversion from the sensible to the super-sensible; it is the upward tendency of the human soul; it is a real force, which drives the soul in the direction of the Ideal world."[37] Viewed outside the discipline of Platonic dialectic, it is, as de Rougemont says,

> complete Desire, luminous Aspiration, the primitive religious soaring carried to its loftiest pitch, to the extreme exigency of purity which is also the extreme exigency of Unity. But absolute unity must be the negation of the present human being in his suffering multiplicity. The supreme soaring of desire must end in non-desire. The erotic process introduces into life an element foreign to the diastole and systole of sexual attraction - a desire that never lapses, that nothing can satisfy, that even rejects and flees the temptation to obtain its fulfilment in the world, because its demand is to embrace no less than the All. It is infinite transcendence, man's rise into his god. And this rise is without return.[38]

Eros freed of logos and incarnate in myth and poetry belongs to a mystical tradition that is foreign to Christianity, the tradition of the Orient. In Buddhist mysticism, for example, the experience of Nirvana is the union of the soul (Atman) with the undifferentiated One (Brahman). The way to this union is the cessation of all desire ending in enlightenment (the Buddha), which is not only an annihilation of the self in the fallen form of matter but also

the annihilation of the material universe. This process of purification takes place through a series of re-incarnations in which the soul is gradually released from the cyclic round of the wheel of life. This same image of a wheel in explaining the various re-incarnations of the soul is used in Orphic theology[39], and Plato also makes use of it in the Phaedrus.[40] Whether or not Orphism has its origin in Oriental mysticism cannot be proved. The legend of Dionysus records that he 'converted'[41] the whole of India to his orgiastic cult and the period of the seventh century is recognized by the archaeologists as "the Orientalising period of Greek art."[42] The distinguishing characteristic of this period in art is the use of purely symbolical forms which steer clear of realism altogether. In contrast, Greek art of the fifth and fourth centuries "offers an idealism based on realism, that is, the representation of all the finest features of nature." [43] Typical of the orientalising period are the figures, chiefly in bronze, which depict winged creatures of mixed animal and human types completely non-representational in character. These figures are in marked contrast to the winged creatures peculiar to Greek art of the fifth and fourth century; as Langbehn says: "diese fliegen, jene nicht."[44] The figure of Eros which appears in the Orphic cosmogony is thoroughly Oriental in character: a figure of shining light, with golden wings on

his shoulders, four eyes and the heads of various animals. This same Oriental character, though realistic rather than symbolic, is found in many of the later figures of Dionysus in which he appears as a slant-eyed Oriental.[45] Significantly enough, Newton, from whom Shelley derived much of his knowledge of Orphism, assumes the Oriental origin of Orphism: the Orphic scheme of salvation he finds in the esoteric meaning of the Hindu Zodiac.

From the Christian point of view Oriental mysticism is an irrational plunge into an abyss of nothingness. The goal of Eros is death. Agape, on the other hand, gives a new integrity to the human personality. God's assumption of human form in the person of Christ redeems both flesh and spirit and makes of flesh the temple of an indwelling presence. God's gift of love makes it possible for man to love himself and his neighbour as himself. Through grace, man, unworthy in and of himself, is made worthy. The apocalypse, therefore, is not absorption into the One but the assumption of a spiritual body.

Blake, who found in the Bible the great code of art, viewed the apocalypse essentially in Christian terms, that is, as the assumption of a spiritual body. His giant Forms are the figures of the apocalypse. He belongs to the tradition of Christian Platonism in the Italian Renaissance in which the imaginative approach to God lies through love

and beauty. The beauty of Beatrice, for example, is the image of the beauty of God so that she is the beatific vision of God. Shelley's Platonism, however, is, in its final phase at least, Pythagorean and Orphic rather than Christian. Blake, with his characteristic intuitive grasp of traditions he had never bothered to explore in any rational manner, recognized at once the danger in the Pythagorean and Orphic aspect of Platonism. The idea that art is imitation twice-removed from reality, he utterly rejected; for one thing it was sheer Orphic prudery. Blake would allow no notion of the soul as distinct from the body; the imaginative enlargement of the soul has the form of a spiritual body.

So long as Shelley identified Eros with the creative imagination, he too was able to create the spiritual bodies of the apocalypse. In the end, however, Eros led him beyond the world created by the imagination to the One. That process has already been examined with reference to Plato's rejection of myth. It must now be examined with reference to Plato's doctrine of Eros.

Shelley wrote a brief essay on the subject of love in 1815 in which he defines what he means by love.

> It is that powerful attraction towards all that we conceive, or fear, or hope beyond ourselves, when we find within our own thoughts the chasm of an insufficient void, and seek to awaken in all things that are, a community with what we experience within ourselves . . . . We are born into the world, and there is something within us which, from the instant that we live, more and more thirsts after its likeness. It is probably in correspondence with this law that

the infant drains milk from the bosom of its mother; this propensity develops itself with the development of our nature. We dimly see within our intellectual nature a miniature as it were of our entire self, yet deprived of all that we condemn or despise, the ideal prototype of everything excellent or lovely that we are capable of conceiving as belonging to the nature of man . . . . [A] soul within our soul that describes a circle around its proper paradise, which pain, and sorrow, and evil dare not overleap. To this we eagerly refer all sensations, thirsting that they should resemble or correspond with it. The discovery of its antitype; the meeting with an understanding capable of clearly estimating our own . . . this is the invisible and unattainable point to which Love tends.[46]

This statement contains within it the germ of much of Shelley's later poetry. He speaks, first of all, of the archetype within the soul (the ideal or perfection of human nature) which assumes imaginative form in the figure of Prometheus. He speaks also of the correspondence between this prototpye and its antitype (all those sensations which are referable to the prototype). This correspondence finds its imaginative form in the re-union of Prometheus and Asia. And he speaks, finally, of the unattainability of finding that antitype in another person. This latter point is the theme of Alastor. Love, therefore, as here described is the infinite yearning of the soul for its antitype, a yearning that cannot be fulfilled in the relationship between man and woman and must, as a result, find its fulfillment,not in the real, but the ideal world of poetry. Hence, in the preface to Prometheus Unbound, he describes poetry as "beautiful idealisms of moral excellence."[47] As early as 1815, Shelley recognized that Eros is, as Nygren defines it, "a

real force driving the soul upwards to seek the world of the Forms." And those Forms are the antitype of the prototype within man, or, in terms of the myth, the god behind the mask.

The revelation of the archetypal figure within man, says Shelley in his essay, Speculations On Morals, written in the same year, lies in the shaping power of the imagination. Imagination, he defines, as "mind prophetically [imaging forth] its objects."[48] This power to image forth the objects of the mind converts desire into an image of its object. Imagination is the form or vision of Eros. The more refined and intense the passion, the more beautiful its imaginative form. For Shelley, the supreme image of Eros in modern literature was Dante's Beatrice because of the spiritual passion that dictated it. "His apotheosis of Beatrice in Paradise, and the gradations of his own love and her loveliness, by which as by steps he feigns himself to have ascended to the throne of the Supreme Cause, is the most glorious imagination of modern poetry."[49]

Yet, because Eros longs for the infinite, it must destroy the very forms that seek to embody it. The poet, possessed by Eros, must perpetually bring into existence new configurations of form. Eros forever outreaches the power of the imagination to confine it within a given shape. Like a flame, it is forever consuming and, at the same time,

forever refining. That ultimate refinement is the recovery of pure Being in which prototype and antitype become one and both disappear. The principle of opposition which makes objects or images to appear out of the Heraclitean flux is stilled into a motionless Nirvana. How clearly Shelley perceived this ultimate unpredicated state as early as 1815 can be seen in his essay On Life. Associating Eros with life itself, he says:

> The mist of familiarity obscures from us the wonder of our being. We are struck with admiration at some of its transient modifications, but it is itself the great miracle. What are the changes of empires, the wreck of dynasties, with the opinions which supported them; what is the birth and the extinction of religious and political systems to life? What are the revolutions of the globe which we inhabit, and the operations of the elements of which it is composed, compared to life? What is the universe of stars, and suns, of which this inhabited earth is one, and their motions, and their destiny, compared with life? Life, the great miracle, we admire not, because it is so miraculous. It is well that we are thus shielded by the familiarity of what is at once so certain and so unfathomable, from an astonishment which would otherwise absorb and overawe the functions of that which is its object.[50]

This statement of Shelley's echoes, in a curious way, the last words of Diotima to Socrates in the Symposium. Once again, it is important to note that Shelley, in his reading, sought analogues for those interior experiences which were peculiar to his nature. That these analogues helped him to shape his vision is evident; but the assistance took the form of confirmations of what was already present within himself. He was in this sense the true Platonist; all his knowledge was a form of reminiscence.

Plato, more than any other author, was the midwife who assisted at its birth. In other words, after all the so-called sources have been examined and related to Shelley's apocalyptic vision, one is forced back to something like Plato's own myth to provide not the real account, but the likely account of their origin. When Jung was confronted with the extraordinary re-occurrence of the archetypal figures and patterns of primitive myth in the dreams of his patients he was led to posit a racial unconscious to explain it. The materials that Shelley shaped into an imaginative pattern cannot be accounted for by a series of footnotes as in Eliot's The Wasteland. When it is confronted by a poet like Shelley, it is evident that the field of literary criticism is still in a very primitive stage. His prose works are full of suggestions that have been taken up by anthropologists, archaeologists and psychologists. It may very well be, as Professor Frye suggests, that these related fields of investigation are the ground work for a science of literary criticism.[51]

The prose works of 1815 present a constellation of ideas, the implications of which were to be worked out in the poetry of his maturity. Shelley's evolution as a poet, moving spirally not lineally, follows, under the propulsion of Eros, a pattern that reveals four fairly distinct phases: love as a cosmic principle making for harmony in the universe

(Queen Mab and Prometheus Unbound); love as the personal desire of the prototype for its antitype (Alastor and Epipsychidion); love as the sole law of the moral world (The Revolt of Islam); love as mystical union with the One (Adonais). The poems listed in parenthesis, of course, cannot be limited to any one of these phases; they present rather the more characteristic expression of a particular phase, while gathering, as in a spiral, other phases into it.

These poems present two aspects of Shelley's apocalyptic vision; one personal, the other racial. The evolution of both aspects shows Shelley moving from a partial failure to ultimate success; from Alastor to Epipsychidion on the one hand, and from Queen Mab to Prometheus Unbound on the other. In The Revolt of Islam, he made his first attempt to combine the personal (Laon and Cythna) with the racial (human regeneration); not until Prometheus Unbound, however, were the two apocalyptic themes fused into a single organic vision.

To trace the growth of Shelley as a poet is to examine the gradual clarification of his central and controlling vision of the wholeness of the cosmos embracing both nature and man. Propelled by Eros, he sought to resurrect the entire universe into the form of a spiritual body which would be the antitype of that prototype within himself. This imaginative re-creation Shelley described as the desire

within the poet to arrest from decay "the visitations of the divinity within Man." As an apocalyptic poet, he could not rest until the entire cosmos had been transfigured into an image of that inner divinity, the "soul within the soul.".

In the Hymn to Intellectual Beauty, which is, as it were, the poet's manifesto, Shelley dedicates himself to this task. He speaks, in the opening lines of the poem, of that "awful shadow of unseen Power", which visits this "various world with an inconstant wing", and goes on to say how, in the midst of his quest to resolve the riddle of existence, that shadow fell upon him. This visitation, he says, led him to dedicate his powers to that mysterious force, to become the incarnation of that shadow, the redeemer who would lift the veil of familiarity from the world and reveal its "awful Loveliness".

The disciple of Eros, however, cannot, as Plato says, be content with shadows. He must ultimately penetrate beyond the shadow world of images, beyond the analogia visionis to Beauty itself. Whatever is created in the name of Eros does not partake of true Being for Eros is not a god, but a daemon who shows the way in the world of Becoming to the world of Being. Poetry, while "a moving image of eternity" is, above all, an image. It is complete in itself as a pattern of words and images ,and, at the same time, it

is the reflected shadow of that which casts it.

This dual nature of poetry, like the dual nature of Eros who is the offspring of Plenty and Want, can be illustrated with reference to Keats's Ode on a Grecian Urn in which both the completeness and the incompleteness of a work of art are shown not so much in statement as in the images themselves. The function of art, says Keats, is to arrest a moment of beauty (a moment of imaginative perception which Shelley would call a "visitation of the divinity in Man") in order that it might be released from mutability (the world of nature) by giving it permanent form. To the extent to which any work of art is an eternal form, it participates in Form itself (in the Platonic sense) and therefore is the image of truth or truth knowable on earth. Hence:

> "Beauty is truth, truth beauty," - that is all
> Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know.

The phrase "on earth", however, is an important qualification. The "silent form" of the Grecian Urn, he says, "dost tease us out of thought/ As doth eternity". Does this statement mean that art adumbrates a truth beyond the reach of art? There is evidence within the images themselves that suggests it does. The bride on the Urn is "still unravish'd", the lover can never kiss "though winning near the goal", and the Urn itself is a "Cold Pastoral" where boughs can never shed their leaves (or bear fruit) and Spring is

eternal (and therefore there is no harvest). It would appear that the images, complete within the total pattern of the poem, suggest or evoke a truth beyond their reach. That truth is Being itself where the bride is ravished and yet chaste, the lover enjoys his love without the satiety of love, and the trees shed their leaves and yet do not die. A world, in other words, where eternity is not something arrested, nor, on the other hand, a wheel making its endless cyclic round of death and regeneration.

The ambiguity of the poetic image Plato would explain in terms of the nature of Eros. Eros, he says, is neither a mortal nor an immortal but a daemon who acts as a mediator between the world of Becoming and the world of Being. The soul, in its fallen condition of flesh, yearns to behold once again the world of the Forms. Eros is the personification of that yearning, the principle of generation which, out of the memory of pre-existence, brings forth images of immortality. These images are the expression of something immortal and eternal in mortality, approximations of that state of Being which the soul originally enjoyed.

They approximate Being in the realm of Becoming because they find their source in the memory of the Forms. At the sight of beautiful objects, those images, lying dormant in the unconscious, are, as it were, awakened and assume an autonomous life of their own. Hence Plato defines

memory as "the science of escape". Ultimately it is possible to resurrect all the images from the fallen state of forgetfulness at which time the total pattern of images reflects the soul's original condition. When this occurs - and for Plato it requires the method of dialectic - the soul beholds itself in the creation of its antitype. At that moment, says Plato, the image, as it were, dissolves and the soul is left in the contemplation of itself in a state of total recollection.

In that year of illumination, 1815, Shelley not only dedicated himself to poetry but described its limits. "We dimly see ", he says,

> within our intellectual nature a miniature as it were of our entire self, yet deprived of all that we condemn or despise, the ideal prototype of everything excellent or lovely that we are capable of conceiving as belonging to the nature of man . . . a soul within our soul that describes a circle around its proper paradise. [52]

This circle around the paradise of the prototype within the soul is the form of his apocalyptic vision. The content of that circle was, in 1815, but dimly perceived. Gradually, however, the veils were lifted until he achieved, in Prometheus Unbound, a total perception of the content of that circle. And with that total perception he met, like the Magus Zoroaster in Prometheus Unbound (I, i, 192), his own image and was united with himself. He had discovered the imageless truth, the real apocalypse of which his own

created vision was the analogue. The "dome of many-coloured glass" was smashed and his "spirit's light" satiated "the void circumference".

Chapter 4

SHELLEY'S CONCEPTION OF THE APOCALYPTIC VISION

On the basis of the previous three chapters it is possible to gather together various threads and define the nature of Shelley's apocalyptic vision. The word ἀποκάλυψις means an unveiling or an uncovering. For Shelley, this unveiling is a revelation of the divinity in man. Within man, he says, there exists potentially an ideal self which he variously describes as the "prototype",[1] "a being within our being"[2] and a "soul within our soul."[3] Outside the mind of man there exists a shapeless mass of sensations which impress themselves upon the mind where they assume a certain order that reflects the inner nature of the perceiver. The ideal self within man, viewed in terms of its potential, is a shaping spirit and it is this shaping spirit or imagination that reduces the mass of sensations from without to an imaginative order which Shelley calls the "antitype"[4] of the prototype within man. Imagination is therefore a creative power because it transforms what is merely potential both within man and in nature into a

realized form. It is this realized form that is the revelation of the divinity in man.

In the Timaeus, Shelley thought he recognized, in its archetypal form, the way in which the creative imagination works. Necessity is the barren chaos of sensations which the Demi-urge (the shaping spirit of imagination from Shelley's point of view) wins over by persuasion to what is best, so that the universe stands revealed as the image of that world of Forms in whose presence the soul, prior to its descent into a body, stood. Shelley interprets Plato's world of Forms as the prototype within man.

There is, however, Shelley says, a danger inherent in the realization of imaginative form. When the prototype stands forth in the creation of its own image, that image tends, with time, to break loose from its source and take on an autonomous existence of its own. When this happens the universe (whose form, viewed in terms of its origin, is the created image of the prototype) is conceived as something separate from the mind of the perceiver and therefore, in some sense, set over against man as object to subject, as thing to thought. This mode of perception Shelley identifies with reason which, he says, stands in relation to the imagination "as the body to the spirit, as the shadow to the substance."[5] When imagination fails and reason assumes control, the spirit that informs body is

lost and the substance that casts its shadow is forgotten. Men live in a world that resembles Plato's cave in the Republic.

The visionary forms of poetry, therefore, must be continuously recreated from their source in the prototype within man. Unless this process of recreation is continuous, poetry descends to dogma. The revelation of the divinity in man separates itself from man and becomes a God whose authority is imposed from without through a set of institutions erected in His name. When this happens (as in the case of Christianity according to Shelley) poets must arise who, like Prometheus, steal the creative fire from God and return it to men where it properly belongs. Thus, for Shelley, all poetry written since the dawn of human history is a single cyclic poem to which all poets have contributed in their effort continuously to recreate its single archetypal vision.

The apocalyptic nature of poetry, therefore, lies in its unveiling of the divinity in man through a continuous process of recreating its archetypal form. Poetry, says Shelley, "reproduces the common Universe of which we are portions and percipients, and it purges from our inward sight the film of familiarity which obscures from us the wonder of our being."[6] It "withdraws life's dark veil from before the scene of things";[7] once that "dark veil" is re-

moved the prototype (the "wonder of our being") stands revealed in the creation of its antitype, which is the entire universe transfigured by a moment of imaginative perception.

> It transmutes all that it touches, and every form moving within the radiance of its presence is changed by wondrous sympathy to an incarnation of the spirit which it breathes; its secret alchemy turns to potable gold the poisonous waters which flow from death through life; it strips the veil of familiarity from the world, and lays bare the naked and sleeping beauty, which is the spirit of its forms.[8]

The universe imaged forth "as an incarnation of the spirit" is the antitype of the divinity in man, and is presented, therefore, in the form of myth. As soon as Shelley became aware of the importance of the creative imagination, he became a poet in search of a myth within which he could express his own apocalyptic vision. No poet, of course, simply incorporates another poet's myth into his own poetry: myth stands in need of continuous recreation. What myth does is to define a poetic tradition through its allegiance to a single archetypal form. Toward the discovery of that form Shelley was guided by his reading of Plato (among others) whose mythical foundations were in Orphism. In Orphism Shelley rediscovered the Dionysian myth and set to work to recreate it out of his own imagination. The choice of the Dionysian myth, however, was governed by other factors than his reading of Plato, and these factors must now be considered.

With the possible exception of Coleridge, Shelley's reading covered a wider range than any other English Romantic poet. His early reading during the period around 1812 was centred in the philosophy of the Enlightenment, both French and English. Between 1812 and 1815, there is a shift in emphasis from the Enlightenment to Greek literature. Greek literature continued throughout the rest of his life to dominate his reading. Coupled with his consuming interest in Greek literature was a steadily increasing interest in the Bible, especially the New Testament and "portions of the Old Testament - the Psalms, the Book of Job, the Prophet Isaiah, and others, the sublime poetry of which", says Mary Shelley, "filled him with delight."[9] Viewed in terms of their imaginative form, each of these literary traditions presents, either implicitly or explicitly, an apocalyptic vision: in the philosophy of the Enlightenment, a secular apocalypse rooted in the doctrine of progress and perfectibility; in Greek literature, a pagan apocalypse rooted in the doctrine of Eros; in the literature of the Bible, a Christian apocalypse rooted in the doctrine of Agape. For Shelley, with his knowledge of Orphism, the apocalyptic vision inherent in Christianity and the Enlightenment were arrested, owing to the inadequacy of their foundations. The Christian apocalypse, Shelley believed, had its foundation in the concept of Jehovah, while the

apocalypse of the Enlightenment had its foundation in the concept of Nature. The Dionysian myth, on the other hand, provided the total form of the apocalypse within which both Christianity and the Enlightenment were imaginatively re-created and fulfilled.

Shelley's conception of the Bible in 1812 is recorded at length in his Notes to Queen Mab. While that conception reflects the attitude of a "votary of Reason" who views all myth simply as the ignorance of natural causes among a barbarous people, it nevertheless underwent no radical modifications in his later years. In the Notes, he says that "Milton's poem alone will give permanency to the remembrance of its absurdities".[10] And precisely the same point of view is expressed in A Defense of Poetry: "commentators", he says, "will be learnedly employed in elucidating the religion of ancestral Europe, only not utterly forgotten because it will have been stamped with the eternity of Milton's genius."[11] What he has to say about the content of the Bible in the Notes to Queen Mab, therefore, represents a point of view consistently held throughout his life. For this reason, it may be quoted at length. "A book", he says,

> is put into our hands when children, called the Bible, the purport of whose history is briefly this: That God made the earth in six days, and there planted a delightful garden, in which he placed the first pair of human beings. In the midst of this garden he planted a tree, whose fruit, although within their reach, they were forbidden to touch.

That the Devil, in the shape of a snake, persuaded them to eat of this fruit; in consequence of which God condemned both of them and their posterity yet unborn, to satisfy his justice by their eternal misery. That, four thousand years after these events (the human race in the mean while having gone unredeemed to perdition), God engendered with the betrothed wife of a carpenter in Judea (whose virginity was nevertheless uninjured), and begat a Son, whose name was Jesus Christ; and who was crucified and died, in order that no more men might be devoted to hell-fire, he bearing the burthen of his Father's displeasure by proxy. The book states, in addition, that the soul of whoever disbelieves this sacrifice will be burned with everlasting fire.[12]

It is evident from this account of the content of the Bible that, in Shelley's opinion, it is dominated throughout by the image of Jehovah, an angry and vengeful God who visits judgment upon the human race. Whether or not Shelley's understanding of the Bible was governed by his reading of Milton's Paradise Lost rather than the Bible itself, it is impossible to say. It is quite evident, however, from his Notes to Queen Mab that, in his comments on the Bible, he had Milton's poem in mind, and that the poem, with its "distorted notions of invisible things"[13] had made a profound impression upon him.

These same distorted notions, Shelley believed, were characteristic of most Christian art. His comments six years later on Michelangelo's vision of the apocalypse painted in fresco on the vault of the Sistine Chapel, for example, reveal that he still held the same attitude which he expresses in his Notes to Queen Mab.

In the picture to which I allude God is leaning out of Heaven, as it were eagerly enjoying the final scene of the

infernal tragedy he set up the Universe to act. The Holy Ghost in the shape of a dove is under him. Under the Holy Ghost stands Jesus Christ in an attitude of haranguing the assembly. This figure which his subject, or rather the view which it became him to take of it, ought to have modelled of a calm severe awe-inspiring majesty, terrible yet lovely, is in the attitude of common place resentment. On one side of this figure are the elect, on the other the host of heaven,..floating onward and radiant with the everlasting light (I speak in the spirit of their faith), which had consumed their mortal veil. They are in fact very ordinary people. Below, is the ideal purgatory, I imagine, in mid air, in the shapes of spirits, some of whom daemons are dragging down, others falling as it were by their own weight, others half suspended in that Mahomet-coffin kind of attitude which most moderate Christians I believe expect to assume. Every step towards hell approximates to the region of the artist's exclusive power. There is great imagination in many of the situations of these unfortunate spirits. But hell and death are his real sphere. The bottom of the picture is divided by a lofty rock, in which there is a cavern, whose entrance is thronged by devils, some coming in with spirits, some going out for prey. The blood red light of the fiery abyss glows through their dark forms. On one side are the devils in all hideous forms struggling with the damned who have received the sentence at the redeemer's throne, and chained in all forms of agony by knotted serpents, and writhing on the crags in every variety of torture. On the other are the dead coming out of their graves, horrible forms. Such is the famous "Day of Judgment" of Michael Angelo. - a kind of Titus Andronicus in painting: but the author surely no Shakespeare.[14]

Shelley's abhorrence of the Old Testament Jehovah must be understood in relation to his distinct anti-primitivism. "Later and more correct observations", he says in the Essay on Christianity, "have instructed us that uncivilized man is the most pernicious and miserable of beings, and that the violence and injustice, which are the genuine indications of real inequality obtain in the society of these beings without mixture and palliation."[15] The figure

of Jehovah is the archetypal image of the mind of uncivilized man, for the mind of God, as he points out in A Defense of Poetry, "is itself the image of all other minds."[16] What he reflects, therefore, is "the limitedness of their views, and their ignorance of natural causes."[17] And where men are ignorant of natural causes, Nature, when viewed as something separate, mysterious and remote, becomes an object of terror.

"Every epoch," says Shelley in A Defense of Poetry, "under names more or less specious, has deified its peculiar errors; Revenge is the naked idol of the worship of a semi-barbarous age".[18] The role of Christ in the New Testament, Shelley believed, was to destroy this "naked idol" of the Jews by replacing it with a vision of the "divinity in Man" which is the image of God. To Christ, in his Essay on Christianity, he attributes the following sentiments:

> Whoever has maintained with his own heart the strictest correspondence of confidence, who dares to examine and to estimate every imagination which suggests itself to his mind, who is that which he designs to become, and only aspires to that which the divinity of his own nature shall consider and approve - he, has already seen God.[19]

But this radical vision of God from within was immediately rejected by the barbarous worshippers of Jehovah and "Jesus was sacrificed to the honor of that God with whom he was afterwards confounded."[20] The crucifixion, in other words, was the victory of Jehovah over the vision of Christ.

Because Christianity views the crucifixion as a redemptive act, rather than an epitome of ignorance and superstition handed down from a semi-barbarous age, it is simply the perpetuation of Jehovah worship, the tyranny of an uncivilized past over a more enlightened present. "It is of importance, therefore," Shelley says,

> to distinguish between the pretended character of this being as the son of God and the Saviour of the world, and his real character as a man, who, for a vain attempt to reform the world, paid the forfeit of his life to that overbearing tyranny which has since so long desolated the universe in his name. Whilst the one is a hypocritical demon, who announces himself as the God of compassion and peace, even whilst he stretches forth his blood-red hand with the sword of discord to waste the earth, having confessedly devised this scheme of desolation from eternity; the other stands in the foremost list of those true heroes, who have died in the glorious martyrdom of liberty, and have braved torture, contempt, and poverty, in the cause of suffering humanity.[21]

To isolate the vision of Christ from the context of Jehovah became, for Shelley, intimately connected with his role as an apocalyptic poet. Two possibilities were open to him: he could, like Blake, recreate in his own poetry the vision of Christ by creating his own myth based upon Biblical symbolism, or he could turn to another body of myth altogether. The latter possibility he chose for reasons that must now be explored.

Fundamental to Godwin's whole system was his conviction that man, in all his actions, should be governed by his own inner nature. The only excuse for the imposition of authority from without was a lack of man's conscious-

ness of himself as a rational, and therefore moral, being. Ideally conceived, man is capable, through his reason, of comprehending the order of the universe and patterning his own behaviour upon that order. Implicit in this conception of the nature of man is the belief in a real identity between the inner life of a rational being and the outer order of the cosmos. Man, as he actually is, however, is out of harmony with the universal order that surrounds him, and this disharmony between man and the universe is the result of the restriction of his consciousness.

Godwin's view of the relationship between man and the universe is typical of the philosophy of the whole Enlightenment. The eighteenth-century passion for the moral reformation of society, of which Shelley's Queen Mab is perhaps the most characteristic poetic statement in English literature, found its centre in the belief that man, under the guidance of reason, was perfectible and that progress toward that perfection was inevitable so long as he was rational. The great obstacle to the attainment of this state of perfection was the superstitions that had been inherited from the Christian past. Like many of the moral reformers of the Enlightenment (some of whom Shelley quotes in his Notes to Queen Mab), Shelley believed that, for any enlightened man, Christianity was obsolete: "men will laugh as heartily at grace, faith, redemption,

and original sin, as they now do at the metamorphoses of Jupiter, the miracles of Romish saints, the efficacy of witchcraft, and the appearance of departed spirits."[22]

The words, "grace, faith, redemption, and original sin", all imply that, in the Christian scheme, the natural man is, in some sense, depraved along with the entire order of nature. If he is to be restored to his original unfallen condition, therefore, he must transcend nature (including his own human nature). To transcend nature, however, is impossible and to attempt it, on the basis of his own volition, is simply to repeat the original crime of Adam and re-confirm his own natural depravity. All purely human effort, therefore, is a vicious circle which begins and ends in sin. This being the universal condition of humanity, only supernatural intervention can provide a way out. Upon this premise emerged the Christian doctrine of Agape, a doctrine utterly distinct from anything associated with natural love and applicable only to the nature of God, and God, not as comprehended by reason, but as accepted by faith. It is precisely against this whole conception of natural depravity with its attendant doctrine of Agape that the moral reformers rebelled.

The doctrine of Agape involves a view of God as a Being utterly distinct and separate from man. The authority of the God of Agape, therefore, does not, as in the case

of Eros, dictate from within man; He imposes from without. And this is the sort of authority that both Godwin and Shelley reject. Confronted by such a doctrine concerning the nature of God only two points of view are possible; either God is good and man is depraved or man is good and God is a tyrant. If one begins, Shelley implies in Queen Mab, with the premise that man is depraved, then, viewed through the eyes of depravity, the tyrant God is the epitome of moral virtue, and the more mortals He damns, the more it redounds to His glory. Agape, therefore, is really hatred and revenge, masquerading as love, a God who pretends to compassion and peace "even whilst he stretches forth his blood-red hand with the sword of discord to waste the earth, having confessedly devised this scheme of desolation from eternity." In other words, behind the mask of Agape, Jehovah is lurking. The Christian apocalypse is the unmasking of Jehovah which is the revelation of the Day of Judgment, a veritable blood-bath of suffering humanity who, like Christ, are tortured by the angry slaves of Jehovah. So far as Shelley was concerned, there was no place for the risen Christ in the worship of Jehovah, which is institutional Christianity.

The alternative possibility, namely, that man is good and God is a tyrant, involves, when imaginatively understood and expressed in terms of myth, the figure of Pro-

methean man resurrecting his lost divinity by stealing fire from the gods and turning that creative power to his own use. Within the framework of the Promethean myth a vision of the risen Christ was possible, and Shelley, in Prometheus Unbound, makes clear the identity of his archetypal hero with the figure of Christ. Prometheus Unbound is Shelley's vision of the victory of Christ over Jehovah presented in terms of Prometheus's victory over Jupiter.

Unlike Blake, whose theory of poetry is in many respects similar to his own, Shelley found it impossible to recreate the Biblical myth by making use of Biblical symbolism. His early schooling in the philosophy of the Enlightenment, a schooling which Blake rejected from the outset, made a profound impression upon his mind and throughout his career he shared the distinct distaste for Christianity which is so characteristic of the whole Enlightenment. As a disciple of the Enlightenment, he not only shared a dislike for Christianity but for all mythological formulations of thought. And, as an imaginative poet, he had already, (1812) been introduced by Newton to Orphism. Before Shelley could reach out to, and comprehend the nature of, myth, it was necessary for him to arrive, within himself, at the rational impasse which confronted almost every serious thinker of the Enlightenment. That impasse, which will be explored later in this chapter, may be here

briefly stated in the following terms: the order of the universe should provide a model upon which to erect the earthly kingdom of God; in effect, however, the view of the universe revealed by science was such that man, as a moral being, was alienated from it. A movement, culminating in the eighteenth century, to remove man from the order of Grace and restore him to the order of Nature ended by leaving him as alienated from Nature as had the Christian doctrine of original sin. The secular vision of the apocalypse rooted in the idea of progress and perfectibility was without foundation in the order of Nature. Shelley, therefore, could not find his "great Code of Art", as Blake calls it, either in the Bible or in the philosophy of the Enlightenment.

Underlying the philosophy of the Enlightenment, however, was a mythological structure. The nature of that structure needs to be explored, for in terms of it Shelley's mature apocalyptic vision was constructed. And the place to begin is with Bacon, whom Shelley considered, along with Dante and Milton, one of the chief "poets" of the Renaissance.

The movement in the Renaissance, for which Bacon is the most eloquent apologist, has been aptly described by Willey as the "rehabilitation of Nature". Viewed in terms of the Christian myth, the "rehabilitation of Nature" meant

for Shelley the rehabilitation of Satan to his original unfallen state. While Willey, in discussing the Christian view of Nature, ignores entirely the theology of Aquinas and Hooker, what he has to say about it is relevant because it reflects Shelley's prejudiced view of Christianity.

> Both the myth-making instinct of paganism and the Stoic yearning for the Universe as the City of God were checked by the Pauline and Augustinian theology, which represented Nature (including man) as depraved since the Fall, and as groaning under the divine malediction. The divine order, the order of Grace, was felt to be wholly separate from, and in a sense opposed to, 'Nature.' The sense which above all marks the Christian consciousness, of sin in man and of imperfection in Nature, expressed itself in a virtual dualism, the Satanic forces being as real as the divine, if less powerful. The 'beggarly elements' of Nature, as St. Paul calls them, were handed over to the Prince of the Air and his fallen angels, who were soon identified with the dethroned divinities of the heathen pantheons. . . . Since earth, water, air and fire were the allotted spheres of the several hierarchies of evil spirits, to study nature meant to repeat the original sin of Adam; it meant a compact with the devil and the death of the soul.[23]

In the Advancement of Learning, Bacon, following what is perhaps the traditional Christian concept of Nature, argues that Nature belongs to the divine order rather than the Satanic. God, he says, has revealed Himself to man by means of two scriptures: the written word and the created universe. While he is careful to pay at least lip-service to the whole Christian scheme of salvation, he argues that the truths of religion must be kept separate from the truths of science. His purpose, however, as Willey points out, was not to preserve the Christian faith so much as to "keep science pure from religion."[24] What Bacon is doing is

shifting the emphasis from Grace to Nature.

So long as science was kept thus pure there was virtually no limit to the possible extension of man's power and greatness. Contemplating the vastness of that extension, man need not wait upon the direct intervention of God to establish the New Jerusalem; by focussing his attention upon the operations of Nature, the New Atlantis was within man's rational grasp. In this grand undertaking, he says in the Novum Organum, men should not give way to despair "considering within themselves the obscurity of nature, the deceitfulness of the senses, the weakness of the judgment, the difficulty of experiment and the like;"[25] rather, men's minds should be brought to particulars, "especially to particulars digested and arranged in my Tables of Discovery. . . since this is not merely the promise of the thing but the thing itself."[26] Men should, at the same time, have faith in God "for the business which is in hand, having the character of good so strongly impressed upon it, appears manifestly to proceed from God, who is the author of good, and the Father of Lights."[27] Since this work of rehabilitating Nature is, in reality, a divine operation, "the smallest beginnings lead to certainty in the end."[28]

And as it was said of spiritual things, "The Kingdom of God cometh not with observation," so it is in all the greater works of Divine Providence; everything glides on smoothly and noiselessly, and the work is fairly going on before men are aware that it has begun. Nor should the

prophesy of Daniel be forgotten, touching the last ages of the world; "Many shall go to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased;" clearly intimating that the thorough passage of the world (which now by so many distant voyages seems now to be accomplished, or in course of accomplishment), and the advancement of the sciences, are destined by fate, that is, by Divine Providence, to meet in the same age.[29]

What here is evident in the writings of Bacon is the beginning of a secular conception of the apocalypse in which the Christian archetypal pattern of a creation, a fall, a redemption and an apocalypse is transferred to the world of science. God's original creation has become obscured to man by the "deceitfulness of the senses and the weakness of judgment". Through attention to particulars, through the method of induction which is the gathering and classifying of particulars, that obscurity can be removed, and nature, as it were, restored to its unfallen condition. As a result of this divine labour, the Kingdom of God, as prophesied by Daniel, will gradually emerge and the apocalypse be a matter of "the advancement of the sciences."

Within this secular framework, the Beatific Vision becomes the result of observation and experiment, and the City of God is revealed in the contemplation of the universe as re-discovered by the scientists. Bruno was perhaps the first to express, in a state of mystical adoration, this new vision. Contemplating the universe as revealed by Copernicus, he exclaims: "By this knowledge we are loosened from the chains of a most narrow dungeon, and set at liberty

to rove in a most august empire; we are removed from the presumptuous boundaries and poverty to the innumerable riches of infinite space, of so worthy a field, and of such beautiful worlds."[30] Since the universe is the revelation of God, everything in nature mirrors His presence. The stars are "those sons of God who shouted for joy at the creation, the flaming heralds his ministers and ambassadors of his glory, a living mirror of the infinite Deity."[31] The universe is the image of God. In Shelley's terms, it is the antitype of the prototype in man.

In the writings of Bruno and Bacon, reflecting the shift from man's engagement with the order of Grace to the order of Nature, is to be found the origins of both the philosophy of the Enlightenment with its faith in progress and perfectibility and the Romantic adoration of Nature. Neither Bruno nor Bacon, however, were scientists in the modern sense, and when one turns to the actual picture of nature that emerges from the work of Galileo, Kepler and Newton it is possible to see how it could, and did, evoke a very different kind of response which led directly to the Romantic rediscovery of myth.

Underlying the whole development of the new philosophy was the effort on the part of scientists to separate the universe as object from the perceiver as subject. Bacon's distinction between two orders of truth, the word

of God revealed in scripture and the works of God revealed in Nature, finds its counterpart in Kepler's and Galileo's distinction between primary and secondary qualities. Primary qualities are those characteristics properly belonging to matter, while secondary qualities are those characteristics properly belonging to mind. The duty of the scientist, as they conceived it, was to isolate the primary qualities of matter and deal with them in isolation from the secondary. The works of God revealed in Nature is the study of His government, not of man, but of things, so that science is essentially a pre-occupation with natural phenomena, the material stuff of the universe viewed in terms of the forces that govern it. The word of God revealed in scripture, on the other hand, was concerned, not with matter, but with man, and man, not as material stuff, but as a living soul, a special creation of God in some sense outside the order of Nature. So long as man was able, in imagination, to project on to Nature the Christian archetypal pattern and see in Nature the revelation of the Christian God, the dichotomy between the world of man and the world of things was not particularly evident to him. Neither for Bruno nor Bacon, for example, was this separation too evident. While Bacon wished to keep science pure from the infringement of religion, he is careful to show that the revelation of God in Nature does not contradict the

revelation of God in scripture. Nature and scripture are simply separate orders of truth, the one rooted in reason, the other rooted in revelation. For Bacon, Christianity was a still living tradition indelibly imprinted upon his thinking and feeling. At the same time, a separation had been made in the interests of the advancement of the sciences. Gradually, the new emphasis replaced the older pattern of thought, and Christianity, as an archetypal pattern, gave way to scientific determinism. By the eighteenth century, Shelley, following the philosophes, was convinced that Christianity, as a system of thought, was obsolete and would soon be laughed off the stage.

The obsoleteness of Christianity, however, posed for the moral reformers of the eighteenth century a serious problem. Viewed entirely in terms of primary qualities, the picture of the universe evolved by the new science left man more alienated from Nature than had the Christian doctrine of original sin. As Whitehead describes it, the new picture of Nature is

> . . . a dull affair, soundless, scentless, colourless; merely the hurrying of material, endlessly, meaninglessly. However you disguise it, this is the practical outcome of the characteristic scientific philosophy which closed the seventeenth century. . . . No alternative system of organizing the pursuit of scientific truth had been suggested. It is not only reigning, but it has no rival. And yet - it is quite unbelievable. This conception of the universe is surely framed in terms of high abstractions, and the paradox only arises because we have mistaken our abstractions for concrete realities. . . . The seventeenth century had finally produced a scheme of scientific thought

framed by the mathematicians, for the use of scientists. The great characteristic of the mathematical mind is its capacity for dealing with abstractions; and for eliciting from them clear-cut demonstrative trains of reasoning, entirely satisfactory so long as it is those abstractions that you want to think about. The enormous success of the scientific abstractions yielding on the one hand matter with its simple location in space and time, on the other hand mind, perceiving, suffering, reasoning, but not interfering, has foisted on to philosophy the task of accepting them as the most concrete rendering of fact.[32]

Confronted by such a picture of Nature, which was the end result of the "rehabilitation of Nature", a new problem faced the reformers - the rehabilitation of man. Diderot, for example, in his speculative works (La physiologie and L'entretien) reached the conclusion, as Becker states, "that the world is mechanically determined, that man is an accident, the soul is 'nothing without a body,' good will is nothing but 'the last impulse of desire and aversion,' and vice and virtue are mere names signifying nothing."[33] This conclusion, however, ran counter to the main concern of his writings, which was to convince the theologians, among others, that the philosophes could place moral virtue on a sounder foundation than a religious one. "It is not enough", says Diderot, referring to the theologians, "to know more than they do: it is necessary to show them that we are better, and that philosophy makes more good men than sufficient or efficacious grace."[34] But how, as an atheist, was it possible to demonstrate this belief? To the end of his days, says Becker, Diderot laboured under

this dilemma; "his mind [was] unable to find any sufficient reason for virtuous conduct, his heart unable to renounce the conviction that nothing is better in this world than a good man."[35] As a materialist and an atheist, in 1812, Shelley faced precisely the same problem. He could paraphrase Bacon by saying that "atheism leaves to man reason, philosophy, natural piety, laws, reputation, and every thing that can serve to conduct him to virtue."[36] And he could argue with Godwin that materialism and moral virtue were not at odds, but he was forced within himself to reject such an idea. "The shocking absurdities of the popular philosophy of mind and matter," he writes in 1815, "its fatal consequences in morals, and their violent dogmatism concerning the source of all things, had early conducted me to materialism. This materialism is a seducing system to young and superficial minds."[37]

Reflected in the thinking of both Shelley and Diderot was the realization that the universe discovered by reason was extremely inhospitable to man. Nature, therefore, had to be conceived anew, and for this task a faculty other than reason, as it was commonly understood, was required if the "bifurcation of Nature" was to be remedied. The solution was first worked out in German idealism of which Coleridge became the most significant spokesman in England. The groundwork of all true philosophy, says Col-

eridge,

> is the full apprehension of the difference between the contemplation of reason, namely that intuition of things which arises when we possess ourselves as one with the whole. . . and that which presents itself when. . . we think of ourselves as separate beings, and place nature in antithesis to mind, as object to subject, thing to thought, death to life.[38]

Coleridge's philosophy of wholeness provided the answer to eighteenth-century dualism and toward it Shelley was inevitably moving. His mature view of the creative imagination was, in most respects, similar to that of Coleridge. Like Coleridge, he realized that within man there is a shaping spirit at work which, when quickened, recreates the forms of nature so that they become the antitype of the prototype within man. The mythological form of that shaping spirit was, for Shelley, the imaginative form implicit in the Renaissance movement which culminates in the Enlightenment. Bacon's effort to re-instate Nature within the divine order and to extend thereby the greatness and power of man was essentially a Promethean undertaking. Conceived in terms of Shelley's mythical vision, the Semitic myth of the Fall was being replaced in Bacon by the Aryan myth of stealing fire from the gods. Nietzsche's distinction between the significance of these two myths has already been explored in the third chapter. "On the other hand," says Willey, with reference to Bacon's titanic undertaking,

that it had at any rate once been possible to think of science quite differently, the Promethean myth was there to testify. The purveyor of knowledge and civilization might be the friend, and not the Adversary, of man. Bacon's task, it may be said, was to prove that natural science was Promethean and not Mephistophelean.[39]

The Promethean myth is a variation upon the myth of Dionysus. Its fundamental assertion is that the creative power of the gods properly belongs to man and through the recovery of this power he can restore his lost divinity. This creative power, in turn, is Eros, the infinite yearning in man to recover his own divine form, to remove all the veils which separate him from Dionysus, the imaginative perception of himself.

In terms of this archetypal Renaissance vision, the poetic tradition to which Shelley belongs, as an apocalyptic poet educated in the philosophy of the Enlightenment, is evident. Prometheus Unbound is the recreation of the Renaissance vision as Shelley interpreted it. Dante and Milton, he considered to be the greatest Renaissance poets. Their peculiar genius lay in uniting the modern and the ancient world. Dante, he says,

was the first awakener of entranced Europe; he created a language, in itself music and persuasion, out of a chaos of inharmonious barbarisms. He was the congregator of those great spirits who presided over the resurrection of learning; the Lucifer of that starry flock which in the thirteenth century shone forth from republican Italy, as from a heaven, into the darkness of the benighted world. His very words are instinct with spirit; each is as a spark, a burning atom of inextinguishable thought; and may yet lie covered in the ashes of their birth, and pregnant with lightning which has yet found no conductor.[40]

Dante, as "the first awakener of entranced Europe", was responsible for the resurrection of Eros; it is his view of love that provides in his poetry "the bridge thrown over the stream of time, which unites the modern and antient World."[41] "Love," Shelley says, "which found a worthy poet in Plato alone of all the antients, has been celebrated by a chorus of the greatest writers of the renovated world".[42] Among that chorus, Dante stands out above all the rest for he "understood the secret things of love even more than Petrarch."[43] The religion of Love, in which "a paradise was created as out of the wrecks of Eden",[44] finds its supreme utterance in the "apotheosis of Beatrice in Paradise, and the gradations of his own love and her loveliness, by which as by steps he feigns himself to have ascended to the throne of the Supreme Cause".[45]

Dante, however, walks through "eternity enveloped and disguised"[46] because he chose to assume, like Milton, a Christian mask and idealize "the distorted notions of invisible things".[47] To become the "conductor" of his "lightning" requires a poet who is capable of recreating his vision from its source in the prototype within man. To recreate that vision, however, it is necessary to disencumber it of the mask within which it is presented. "The Divina Commedia and Paradise Lost have conferred upon modern mythology a systematic form," says Shelley,

and when change and time shall have added one more superstition to the mass of those which have arisen and decayed upon the earth, commentators will be learnedly employed in elucidating the religion of ancestral Europe, only not utterly forgotten because it will have been stamped with the eternity of genius.[48]

When Shelley wrote Epipsychidion (the erotic aspect of his apocalyptic vision) there can be little doubt that he thought of himself as the "conductor" of Dante's "lightning" purging his vision of the "distorted notions of invisible things". He was, that is, recreating the Renaissance vision of man's divine form for his own day, and, at the same time, purging it of those impurities enforced upon Dante by the legal sanctions attached to institutional Christianity.

If Dante's vision is the erotic aspect of Dionysian man, then Milton's vision is the Promethean aspect. Shelley's conviction that Satan is the real hero of Paradise Lost belongs to the Renaissance vision of the divinity in man. Milton, like Dante, encumbered his vision with the distorted notions of the Christian myth from which Shelley, in his recreation of Milton's vision in Prometheus Unbound, purged it, so that his Prometheus becomes a purified Satan.

When Shelley's own apocalyptic vision is related to both Dante and Milton, it becomes clear what Shelley means by the necessity, on the part of the poets, to recreate the vision of their predecessors, and what he means by the single cyclic poem built up since the dawn of human history to which all poets have contributed an episode. Behind the poetry of Dante and Milton lies the poetry of

ancient Greece whose vision, lost during the centuries of Christian barbarism, they restored to the modern world. That vision, Shelley says, was again lost after the Restoration, as it was lost during and after the decline of Greece and the victory of Rome. In his own day, he believed it was again being restored through the rediscovery of the creative imagination as the supreme faculty in man. "For the literature of England," he says,

> an energetic development of which has ever preceded or accompanied a great and free development of the national will, has arisen as it were from a new birth. In spite of the low-thoughted envy which would undervalue contemporary merit, our own will be a memorable age in intellectual achievements, and we live among such philosophers and poets as surpass beyond comparison any who have appeared since the last national struggle for civil and religious liberty. The most unfailing herald, companion, and follower of the awakening of a great people to work a beneficial change in opinion or institution, is Poetry. . . . It is impossible to read the compositions of the most celebrated writers of the present day without being startled with the electric fire which burns within their words. They measure the circumference and sound the depths of human nature with a comprehensive and all-penetrating spirit, and they are themselves perhaps the most sincerely astonished at its manifestations; for it is less their spirit than the spirit of the age.[49]

From the above statement, it is evident that Shelley believed that he lived at the dawn of a new era and that the "spirit of the age" was essentially apocalyptic. His own poetry is the incarnation of that spirit. His prayer to the west wind - "Be through my lips to unawakened earth / The trumpet of a prophecy!" - did not go unheeded.

Part II

THE UNFOLDING OF THE VISION

All but the sacred few who could not tame
Their spirits to the conquerors - but as soon
As they had touched the world with living flame,

Fled back like eagles to their native noon.

The Triumph of Life.

Chapter 5

QUEEN MAB

It is the argument of this study that Shelley's apocalyptic view of poetry has its source in a mode of mental action within himself which was not subject to his conscious control. In Plato's Ion this mode of mental action was explained as hieromania, and on the basis of that explanation Shelley formulated the conception of poetry which he presents in his Defense. Plato's theory of divine madness is essentially Orphic in origin and belongs within that larger mythical framework of the soul's preexistence, its descent into flesh, and its ultimate return to the world of the Forms. This mythical framework Shelley adopted as the most probable explanation of that spiritual illumination which the poet experiences when his creative faculty assumes control. The inspired poet enjoys a temporary release from the prison of flesh and re-assumes the form of his own divinity.

> What were Virtue, Love, Patriotism, Friendship - what were the scenery of this beautiful Universe which we inhabit: what were our consolations on this side of the grave, and what were our aspirations beyond it, if Poetry did not as-

cend to bring light and fire from those eternal regions where the owl-winged faculty of calculation dare not ever soar?[1]

In Queen Mab Shelley for the first time ascended in imagination to "those eternal regions", and returned bearing their gifts - a universe once more rendered beautiful and an aspiration beyond it. The chief value of the poem lies in the evidence it provides of the ascension of an imaginative vision from the tomb of materialistic determinism. The poem, therefore, provides an account of the death of Shelley as a "votary of Reason" and his rebirth as an imaginative poet.

In 1812 Shelley was in no position to explain the nature of the creative process at work within himself. Consciously at least, he was still a "votary of Reason" who considered the visionary world of the poets a delusion based upon ignorance of the laws of Nature. In his Notes to the poem he argues against the vision of the poem. Within himself, he was unable to reconcile reason and imagination as two distinct modes of mental action.

How far Shelley was aware of this conflict at the time of composition cannot be determined with any certainty. Did he find the materialistic determinism of D'Holbach an inadequate foundation for his poetic vision and so present them in opposition to each other? Or was he even aware of the opposition? Did he realize the apparent in-

congruity of associating the eighteenth-century faith in rational progress and human perfectibility with universal conversion to the Orphic and Pythagorean system of diet? It would appear that Shelley was not yet able to address himself to these questions, the answers to which rested upon his distinction between reason and imagination. In 1812, Shelley had explored the range of reason in terms of eighteenth-century radicalism; he had not yet explored the range of imagination. That exploration begins properly with Queen Mab and ends with Prometheus Unbound. By the time he wrote the latter poem, he had evolved a view of the creative imagination which, he says, "subdues to union under its light yoke all irreconcilable things."[2] It is this imaginative subjugation of "all irreconcilable things" that is lacking in Queen Mab.

The idea for Queen Mab seems to have occurred to Shelley in December of 1811. In a letter to Elizabeth Hitchener (December 11, 1811), in which he argues against the annihilation of the soul, Shelley says:

> I have now my dear friend in contemplation a Poem. I intend it to be by anticipation a picture of the manners, simplicity, and delights of a perfect state of society, tho' still earthly. Will you assist me? I only thought of it last night.[3]

The poem, however, was postponed because of Shelley's plan to go to Ireland. He had, in other words, more pressing duties to perform; instead of writing the poem, he set

to work to write "An Address to the Irish". On January 20, 1812, he writes again to Elizabeth Hitchener, selecting for her some of the passages from the Address in order to give her an idea of his views. When Shelley returned from Ireland in April of 1812, bitterly disappointed by the failure of the expedition, Godwin advised him that he should have "no intolerable itch to become a teacher",[4] at least until he was more deeply indoctrinated in the ideas which he was seeking to promulgate. This deeper indoctrination required that he gain a more universal perspective. "Oh that I could place you", Godwin wirtes to Shelley,

> on the pinnacle of the ages from which these last twenty years would shrink to an invisible point. It is not after this fashion that moral causes work in the eyes of Him who looks through the vast and, allow me to add, venerable machine of human society.[5]

Queen Mab, it would appear, was an attempt on Shelley's part to take Godwin's advice. The poem, embracing as it does, the past, present and future condition of mankind viewed in perspective from "the pinnacle of the ages" and through the eyes of the Fairy Queen who "looks through the vast. . . and venerable machine of human society", is precisely what the doctor ordered.

With much that went into the poem, however, Godwin entirely disagreed. In his third edition of the Enquiry he argues at some length against the view of the mind as

the mere organ of sensation held by the French materialists, of whom Baron D'Holbach was the chief spokesman. The whole basis of moral progress, Godwin points out, lies in the power of man to stand aside from his own sensations and take "second thought"[6] in terms of which he can alone assume control over his own mental functioning. On the basis of "second thought" man is no longer the slave of his physical sensations, which conduct to immediate sensual gratification; he exists in a mental, and therefore moral, universe. To view the mind in the manner of Lucretius and the French sensationalists as the mere organ of sensation means that man cannot function within a mental universe which is, in some sense, independent of the physical world. He cannot, that is, stand aside from his own sensations and assume the role of a disinterested spectator governed in his moral acts by his dispassionate awareness of the good of the whole. Where disinterestedness is ruled out, man must be governed by a system of rewards and punishments. Such a system requires the perpetuation of external authority, and so long as man is dependent upon external authority, rather than a moral imperative from within, he must forever be the victim of some form of tyranny.

Much or all of this argument Godwin put in a letter to Shelley, and Shelley replied to it on July 29, 1812, when he was either writing, or about to write, Queen Mab. His

comments are worth quoting at some length for they provide the key to the essential inconsistency in the poem.

To begin with Helvetius. I have read La Systeme de la Nature [sic]. I suspect this to be Helvetius's by your charges against it. It is a book of uncommon powers, yet too obnoxious to accusations of sensuality and selfishness. Although, like you an irreconcilable enemy to the system of self love, both from a feeling of its deformity and a conviction of its falsehood, I can by no means conceive how the loftiest disinterestedness is incompatible with the strictest materialism. In fact, the doctrine which affirms that there is no such thing as matter, and that which affirms that all is matter, appear to me, perfectly indifferent in the question between benevolence and self love. I cannot see how they interfere with each other, or why the two doctrines of materialism and disinterestedness cannot be held in one mind, as independently of each other, as the two truths that a cricket ball is round and a box square. Immateriality seems to me nothing but the simple denial of the presence of matter, of the presence of all the forms of being with which our senses are acquainted, and it surely is somewhat inconsistent to assign real existence to what is a mere negation of all that actual world to which our senses introduce us.[7]

Shelley's belief that "the two doctrines of materialism and disinterestedness" can be held in the mind "independently of each other" comes very close to explaining the lack of inner coherence in Queen Mab. Poetry, as an expression of the imagination (and Shelley was aware of the fact that Queen Mab was an expression of the imagination), cannot allow, by its very nature, two ideas to exist independently of each other within a single mind. The whole purpose of the imagination, as Shelley was later to realize, lies in its fusing power; it "marks the before unapprehended relations of things and perpetuates that apprehension".[8] Reason "respects the differences," but imagination "the simili-

tudes of things."[9]

By 1812 Godwin was "an immaterialist and a follower of Berkeley."[10] In an effort to persuade Shelley of his erroneous views concerning materialism, therefore, he asked him to read Berkeley. "I have read Berkeley," Shelley goes on in the letter, "and the perusal of his arguments tended more than anything to convince me that immaterislism, and other words of general usage deriving all their force from mere <u>predicates</u> in <u>non</u>, were invented by the pride of philosophers to conceal their ignorance, even from themselves."[11]

Shelley, of course, is arguing rather naively without really considering the implications of either Godwin's or his own argument. Had he continued to believe what he is pointing out in this letter, his career as a poet would never really have been launched. <u>Queen Mab</u> succeeds as a poem only to the extent that Shelley rejects the ideas he is throwing out at Godwin. The importance of immaterialism and the philosophy of Berkeley from which it is largely derived is, in Godwin's philosophy, closely tied up with the imagination. What Shelley is really arguing against in this letter is the imagination. Because the mind is, in some sense, autonomous, it is possible, Godwin says in the <u>Enquiry</u>

<u>in imagination</u> to go out of ourselves, and become impartial spectators of the system of which we are a part.

We can then make an estimate of our intrinsic and absolute value; and detect the imposition of that self-regard, which would represent our own interest as of as much value as that of all the world beside. The delusion being thus sapped, we can, from time to time at least, fall back in idea into our proper post, and cultivate those views and affections which must be most familiar to the most perfect intelligence.[12]

And this, of course, is precisely what Ianthe does in Queen Mab, and in the most immaterialistic manner possible. Ianthe's soul goes out of her body and becomes "the impartial spectator of the system of which we are a part." As a result, she falls back "in idea into our proper post" and cultivates "those ideas and affections" which are most familiar to that "most perfect intelligence", Queen Mab. In separating Ianthe's soul from her body so that "on fancy's boldest wing" (IV, 155) she might receive a vision of the cosmos and man's destiny in it, Shelley is refuting the materialistic doctrine of Necessity in the poem which he derives from D'Holbach's Systême de la Nature.

Before leaving the letter to Godwin, one further opinion of Shelley's which goes a long way toward explaining the failure of the poem must be looked at. He is taking exception to Godwin's defense of classical learning in one of the Essays of the Enquirer.[13] Godwin, to be sure, is not arguing for the literary merits of classical literature so much as he is arguing for the disciplinary values of the study of classical languages, especially in learning to use words with scientific precision. Shel-

ley, however, is more concerned with the actual content of classical literature.

> And what do we learn from their poets? As you have yourself acknowledged somewhere, "they are fit for nothing but the perpetuation of the noxious race of heroes in the world." Lucretius forms, perhaps, the single exception. Throughout the whole of their literature runs a vein of thought similar to that which you have so justly censured in Helvetius. Honour, and the opinion either of contemporaries, or (more frequently) of posterity, is set so much above virtue as, according to the last words of Brutus, to make it nothing but an empty name. Their politics sprang from the same narrow and corrupted source; witness the interminable aggressions between each other of the states of Greece; the thirst of conquest with which even republican Rome desolated the Earth. They are our masters in politics, because we are so immoral as to prefer self interest to virtue, and expediency to positive good.[14]

It is quite evident from these remarks that Shelley had yet to remove the "temporary dress"[15] in which the poetic creations of classical antiquity were arrayed and discover "the eternal proportions of their beauty."[16] His curious insensitivity to the beauty of their literature is revealed in the almost total lack of literary taste which is so evident in Queen Mab.

On the basis of his letter to Godwin, therefore, it would appear that Shelley was ill-equipped to write a visionary poem in the summer of 1812. Viewed in the light of the influence of the French materialists, Godwin's influence in 1812 was altogether beneficial. Godwin, however, did not view Shelley as a poet and there is no evidence that he approved of anything, other than some of his shorter

works, that he wrote. Where then did the visionary form of the poem derive from?

"In contriving a literary vehicle for his radical ideas," says Professor Baker,

> Shelley made use of a considerable amount of second-hand lumber, on which the stamp of the eighteenth century was prominent. . . . Queen Mab is a somewhat belated example of the eighteenth-century moral allegory, a genre which had attained great popularity among the Augustan and post-Augustan imitators of Spenser, and of which specimens were still appearing in Shelley's time.[17]

He identifies the Fairy Queen with the "usual hierophant" and argues that the vision granted to Ianthe follows the usual allegorical pattern. His conclusion, therefore, is that

> were it not for his new nomenclature and its more ambitious scope, Queen Mab would long ago have taken its place in literary history - perhaps under some such name as The Palace of Nature - with all those other palaces, castles, temples, and houses of Fame, Pleasure, Indolence, Nature, Disease, and Superstition which had been strewn across the literary landscape by Shelley's predecessors.[18]

Although there is ample evidence to prove that Shelley was working within just such a genre as Professor Baker describes (and parallels, as he and other critics have pointed out, are there in abundance), it becomes evident as the poem develops that Shelley is putting his borrowed machinery to a somewhat different use than his predecessors. The descent of Queen Mab, the rising of Ianthe's soul from her body is not just so much second-hand lumber; it is Shelley's first realization in poetic form of the creative

process which was to become the foundation upon which his whole conception of the creative imagination rests. Fundamentally, Shelley's view of the creative imagination finds its source in his analysis of the workings of his own mind. The views of others on the same subject he accepted or rejected as they agreed or disagreed with what he had experienced himself. In 1812 Shelley had not really begun that inner exploration of himself; he was, therefore, hardly conscious of the implications of what he was describing in the opening section of the poem. "Poetry", Shelley writes in his Defense,

> is not like reasoning, a power to be exerted according to the determination of the will. A man cannot say, "I will compose poetry." The greatest poet even cannot say it: for the mind in creation is as a fading coal, which some invisible influence, like an inconstant wind, awakens to transitory brightness: this power arises from within, like the colour of a flower which fades and changes as it is developed, and the conscious portions of our natures are unprophetic either of its approach or its departure. . . . I appeal to the greatest poets of the present day, whether it be not an error to assert that the finest passages of poetry are produced by labour and study. The toil and the delay recommended by critics, can be justly interpreted to mean no more than a careful observation of the inspired moments, and an artificial connexion of the spaces between their suggestions by the intertexture of conventional expressions; a necessity only imposed by the limitedness of the poetical faculty itself.[19]

The purpose here and throughout this study of Shelley's apocalyptic vision is not to criticize Shelley's view of the nature of poetry, but rather to apply that view to an examination of the vision in the belief that what Shelley has to say about the creative faculty provides the most

penetrating insight into the kind of poetry he was writing. So far as this study is concerned, Shelley, in his discussion of poetry, is to be taken seriously and at his word. Any quarrel that one may have with Shelley's poetry may often be reduced to a quarrel with the theory of poetry upon which it is based. It is in this light that the present poem, and succeeding poems, will be examined.

Before turning to an examination of the "inspired moments" of Queen Mab, it might be best to dispense with the "artificial connexion of their suggestions. . . . imposed by the limitedness of the poetic faculty itself." By the "artificial connexion" is here meant those passages in the poem which remain unassimilated to the vision proper. They are to be found primarily in his treatment of Necessity derived from D'Holbach's Système de la Nature.

D'Holbach's initial assumption in the Système de la Nature is that experience and reason are the only trustworthy guides to knowledge. By experience he means the awareness that man has of an external world through the impressions he receives by means of his organs of sense. By reason, he means the power to compare and reflect upon these impressions resulting in a generalization or formulation of a law of Nature which can be taken as true provided it is confirmed by repeated experiences. The one generalization at which man arrives, on the basis of his experience and reflection, is that the external universe is a single objective reality, i.e., matter, active or in a

state of motion.

From matter in motion, then, are derived all the phenomena that strike the senses. It is not caused; it is from eternity and of necessity. Man himself is simply a highly complex form of matter in motion. He has, as a function of matter, no freedom of the will, no soul as distinct from the body so that his death is simply the extinction of his consciousness. To argue either for the freedom of the will or the immortality of the soul is to deny both his reason and the witness of his senses, and to escape into a world of the imagination that has no foundation in the inexorable order of nature.

This desire to escape into a world which has no counterpart in the real world of external objects is simply the result of ignorance which true science attempts to correct. The most that man can attempt to do is to bring his own life and the life of society into conformity with what is. To do this he must destroy the false gods of his imagination and substitute for these false gods correct ideas of nature. He must, in other words, become an atheist. D'Holbach defines the atheist as follows:

C'est un homme, qui détruit des chimères nuisibles au genre humain, pour ramener les hommes à la nature, à l'expérience, à la raison. C'est un penseur qui ayant médité la matière, ses propriétés et ses façons d'agir, n'a pas besoin, pour expliquer les phénomènes de l'univers et les operations de la nature, d'imaginer des puissances ideales, des intelligences imaginaires, des êtres de raison; qui loin de faire

mieux connaître cette nature, ne font que la rendre capricieuse, inexplicable, et méconnaissable, inutile au bonheur des hommes.[20]

D'Holbach's book represents the extreme of eighteenth-century radical thought, and, while it was widely read, it made few converts among the intelligensia. The eighteenth century was quick to expose its inner contradictions. The most glaring Frederick the Great immediately recognized:

After the author has exhausted all evidence to show that men are guided by a fatalistic necessity in all their actions, he had to draw the conclusion that we are only a sort of machine, only marionettes moved by the hand of a blind power. And yet he flies into a passion against priests, governments, and against our whole educational system; he believes indeed that the men who exercise these functions are free, even while he proves to them that they are slaves. What foolishness and what nonsense! If everything is moved by necessary causes, then all counsel, all instruction, all rewards and punishments are as superfluous as inexplicable; for one might just as well preach to an oak and try and persuade it to turn into an orange tree.[21]

Shelley, of course, falls into the same trap. After condemning all priests, statesmen and monarchs, he then goes on to describe the workings of Necessity in the following manner:

> No atom of this turbulence fulfils
> A vague and unnecessitated task,
> Or acts but as it must and ought to act.
> Even the minutest molecule of light,
> That in an April sunbeam's fleeting glow
> Fulfils its destined, though invisible work,
> The universal Spirit guides; nor less,
> When merciless ambition, or mad zeal,
> Has led two hosts of dupes to battle-field,
> That, blind, they there may dig each other's graves
> And call the sad work glory, does it rule

All passions: not a thought, a will, an act,
Nor the workings of the tyrant's moody mind,
Nor one misgiving of the slaves who boast
Their servitude, to hide the shame they feel,
Nor the events enchaining every will,
That from the depths of unrecorded time
Have drawn all-influencing virtue, pass
Unrecognized or unforeseen by thee,
Soul of the universe!

(VI, 171-190.)

In this passage Shelley has in mind not only D'Holbach's determinism but also Pope's Essay on Man. In a letter to Hogg (January 3, 1811), in which he tells Hogg that "Soul of the universe" ought to be substituted for the word God (a point which he argues at length in Queen Mab, although the "Soul of the universe" appears, on the basis of the above passage, even more vengeful than the "God" of Shelley's view), he goes on to say that Pope's line, "All are but parts of one stupendous whole", is "something more than poetry."[22] Pope, however, is arguing a very different point in the Essay on Man than Shelley is arguing in Queen Mab. Because man is ignorant of the total pattern of the universe, his point of view is inevitably limited. What appears evil to man is really "universal good". Therefore he should learn to accept the dictum that "'Whatever is, is right.'" Here is the passage which Shelley probably had in mind in the above quotation:

If plagues or earthquakes break not Heaven's design,
Why then a Borgia, or a Catiline?
Who knows but He, whose hand the lightning forms
Who heaves old ocean, and who wings the storms;
Pours fierce ambition in a Caesar's mind,

> Or turns young Ammon loose to scourge mankind?
> From pride, from pride, our very reas'ning springs;
> Account for moral, as for nat'ral things:
> Why charge we heaven in those, in these acquit?
> In both to reason right is to submit. (I, 155-164.)

And, of course, Pope is right. Given D'Holbach's premise, "to reason right <u>is</u> to submit." Shelley argues that to reason right is to rebel. The rebellion, however, is reasoning derived from an entirely different premise which belongs to the vision proper.

A second, and somewhat more subtle, refutation of D'Holbach's position was offered by Voltaire.[23] D'Holbach, who thought he was fighting against dogmatism and intolerance, says Voltaire, set up his own thesis as dogma and defended it with fanatical zeal. What ought to be, he proclaimed must be. And Shelley, under D'Holbach's influence, fell into the same contradictory position. Writing as the prophet of the coming age of love (within the visionary frame of reference) he then proceeds to damn both the past and the present with an intensity that his loathed Jehovah could hardly surpass. The Hell to which Shelley assigns those who fail to be faithful to his own redemptive vision is, in reality, the same Hell to which Jehovah condemns the unfaithful. And, it may here be added, Shelley never escaped from this dark side of his own apocalyptic vision. The prophet of the Day of Resurrection is also the prophet of the Day of Judgment. Even Prometheus's

forgiveness of Jupiter in Prometheus Unbound could not change his inevitable doom; in fact, it precipitated it. Shelley, it must be added however, is passing judgment not so much upon individuals as on the states of mind to which individuals tend to succumb. "Nature",he says in Queen Mab, "rejects the monarch, not the man; / The subject, not the citizen" (II, 170-1).

Goethe, who criticised D'Holbach's book more for its aesthetic implications than its logical inconsistencies, said that he and his friends could not understand how such a book could be dangerous: "It seemed to us so grey, so Cimmerian, so deathlike that we could hardly stand in its presence, and we shuddered at it as if it were a ghost."[24] And Goethe might well have said the same thing about Shelley's apostrophe to D'Holbach's Necessity:

> all that the wide world contains
> Are but thy passive instruments, and thou
> Regardst them all with an impartial eye
> Whose joy or pain thy nature cannot feel,
> Because thou hast not human sense,
> Because thou art not human mind.
> (VI, 214-219.)

The universe that watches man sounds like something worse than Big Brother in Orwell's 1984; it is not surprising that Goethe and his friends thought of it as something "so death-like that we could hardly stand in its presence." Goethe's reaction is significant because it defines, in part, what the Romantic movement was reacting against and

what Shelley himself was reacting against, though he was not yet entirely aware of it, within the vision proper. The universe that Shelley as a poet believed in (or rather created) was one governed by love and breathing harmony and joy. This is the vision that is revealed to Ianthe's imagination.

Diderot, the editor of the Encyclopedia and perhaps the subtlest thinker of the lot, came closest to justifying the contradictions inherent in D'Holbach's logic.[25] Anticipating the Hegelian dialectic, he argues in his novel, Jack the Fatalist, that thought is often forced implicitly to deny and revoke its own concept even while affirming it. Inthe idea of Necessity, it is necessary to include the inconsistency required to hold it. To bring one's thought full circle it is necessary to oscillate between freedom and necessity, and in doing so it is possible to discover the all-inclusive concept of nature. That concept is beyond truth and falsehood or good and evil because in it both extremes meet without differentiation. Shelley, it will be remembered, says in his letter to Godwin (July 29, 1812) that he thought it quite possible to hold two independent ideas simultaneously in his mind. When he wrote the poem it is evident that freedom of the will - Shelley says in the poem that nature has gifted man with "all subduing will" (V, 133) and that matter "lies

subjected and plastic at his feet" (V, 135) - and Necessity were simultaneously held in his mind. What he finds in the "Spirit of Nature" (VI, 197), with which the spirit of man coalesces to "undertake regeneration's work" (VI, 43), is something that approximates the synthesis of the two ideas. Shelley's "creative faculty" however is still far too undeveloped to pull off such an imaginative feat. Nevertheless, in the analysis of the major vision of the poem it will be evident that what Shelley is doing is redeeming "from decay the visitations of the divinity in Man."[26] And in doing this, he is redeeming the world governed by D'Holbach's Necessity.

In the Notes attached to the poem, Shelley devotes two pages to explaining the doctrine of Necessity. "He who asserts the doctrine of Necessity", he says,

> means that, in contemplating the events which compose the moral and material universe, he beholds only an immense and uninterrupted chain of causes and effects , no one of which could occupy any other place that it does occupy, or act in any other place that it does act. The idea of necessity is obtained by our experience of the connection between objects, the uniformity of the operations of nature, the constant conjunction of similar events, and the consequent inference of one from the other. Mankind are therefore agreed to the admission of necessity if they admit that these two circumstances take place in voluntary action. Motive is, to voluntary action in the human mind, what cause is to effect in the material universe. The word liberty, as applied to mind, is analagous to the word chance, as applied to matter: they spring from an ignorance of the certainty of the conjunction of the antecedents and consequents.[27]

What Shelley is here describing is the rational mode of mental action in terms of which the universe is perceived

as a fixed and immutable order. In this sense it is the habitual world to which all men are subjected. The function of the imagination, however, is, as he points out in his Defense of Poetry, to defeat

> the curse which binds us to be subjected to the accident of surrounding impressions. . . . It makes us the inhabitants of a world to which the familiar world is a chaos. It reproduces the common universe of which we are portions and percipients, and it purges from our inward sight the film of familiarity which obscures from us the wonder of our being.[28]

When Ianthe's soul is released from her body, she "defeats the curse which binds her to be subjected to the accident of surrounding impressions", and becomes the inhabitant "of a world to which the familiar world is a chaos." Her "inward sight" is purged and the wonder of her being is revealed. The difference between the world of "surrounding impressions" and the "wonder of our being", Shelley initially presents in the difference between the soul and the body. Describing Ianthe's soul rising up out of her body at the bidding of the Fairy Queen, Shelley says:

> . . . 'twas a sight
> Of wonder to behold the body and soul.
> The self-same lineaments, the same
> Marks of identity were there:
> Yet, oh, how different! One aspires to Heaven,
> Pants for its sempiternal heritage,
> And ever-changing, ever-rising still,
> Wantons in endless being.
> The other, for a time the unwilling sport
> Of circumstance and passion, struggles on;
> Fleets through its sad duration rapidly;

Then, like a useless and worn-out machine,
Rots, perishes, and passes.
(I, 144-156.)

"To be subjected to the accident of surrounding impressions" is to be "the unwilling sport/ Of circumstance". From this angle of vision man is simply a machine that gradually, but inevitably, wears out and then "rots, perishes, and passes." He is merely a "mechanized automaton" (III, 179). Implicit in this dichotomy of body and soul is a rejection of the view of Necessity as understood by D'Holbach. It was in 1815 that Shelley records the fact that he

was discontented with such a view of things that it [materialism] afforded; man is a being of high aspirations, "looking before and after," whose "thoughts wander through eternity," disclaiming alliance with transience and decay.[29]

Shelley rejected materialism because it was incompatible with the world of imaginative vision. So long as he remained a materialist, the world of imagination was a delusion. What is apparent in Queen Mab is the evidence of Shelley's casting off of materialism in favor of idealism. The poem reveals the first "spontaneous overflow" of his own psychic energy, the nature of which he was only later to understand. And when he understood it he converted what previously he thought a delusion into a vision of ultimate reality. On the basis of his Notes, it would appear that Shelley could not consciously accept the central vision of his poem because he had not yet found a metaphysical justi-

fication for the creative faculty in man. He had not yet defined to his own satisfaction the nature of his creative activity as it was manifest in the composition of the poem.

The fate of Ianthe's body as distinct from her soul is identical to the fate of all the societies of the past, as well as the present society insofar as it is the product of the past. As Ianthe surveys the past, the Fairy Queen says:

> Behold! where grandeur frowned;
> What now remains? - the memory
> Of senselessness and shame -
> What is immortal there?
> Nothing - it stands to tell
> A melancholy tale, to give
> An awful warning: soon
> Oblivion will steal silently
> The remnant of its fame.
> Monarchs and conquerors there
> Proud o'er prostrate millions trod -
> The earthquakes of the human race;
> Like them, forgotten when the ruin
> That marks their shock is past.
> (II, 111-121.)

If the most that the mind of man can affirm both of the external universe and of himself as a part of it is simply matter in a state of perpetual motion, then all the mind can see is an endless recurring cycle of composition and decomposition.

> Thus do the generations of the earth
> Go to the grave and issue from the womb,
> Surviving still the imperishable change
> That renovates the world.
> (V, 1-4.)

Shelley, however, in this passage is not using the verb "renovates" in the sense of perpetuates; he is thinking in terms of the re-birth of humanity and the establishment of a golden age with its foundations not in the past but in the vision of the universe as a "wilderness of harmony" (II, 79) ruled by love.

When Ianthe asks the Fairy Queen how, in the face of what now exists and has existed throughout the past, this new age is to be ushered in, the Demon replies: "When man, with changeless Nature coalescing/ Will undertake regeneration's work" (VI, 42-43). To coalesce with Nature means to perceive it imaginatively; those who "undertake regeneration's work" are those who take flight on "fancy's boldest wing" (IV, 155). When man, like Ianthe, is "laid asleep in body" and "become a living soul" (to use Wordsworth's phrasing) he sees "into the life of things."

To perceive Nature in this imaginative way is to perceive it as the human form divine. "There's not one atom of yon earth", says the Fairy,

> But once was living man;
> Nor the minutest drop of rain,
> That hangeth in its thinnest cloud,
> But flowed in human veins:
> And from the burning plains
> Where Libyan monsters yell,
> From the most gloomy glens
> Of Greenland's sunless clime,
> To where the golden fields
> Of fertile England spread
> Their harvest to the day,
> Thou canst not find one spot

Whereon no city stood.
(II, 210-224.)

The resurrection of man through his imagination is the reassembling of his divine form. Necessity in this imaginative perspective is man's awareness of himself as a fallen being who has been outcast from his Eden. The vision of himself as a soul coalescing with the "Soul of the universe" (VI, 190) transfigures Necessity as an impartial force, mindless and senseless, into a vision of love of which Queen Mab is the image. Queen Mab in the poem is the imaginative form of Necessity. She is the "potable gold" created by the "secret alchemy" of the imagination out of "the poisonous waters which flow from death through life."[30] She is the "naked and sleeping beauty," the spirit of the forms of Nature, which is laid bare when the "veil of familiarity"[31] has been stript from the world.

To illustrate the fact that Queen Mab is the imaginative form of Necessity it is necessary to compare two passages in which Shelley describes the workings of Necessity and the workings of the Fairy Queen and then point up the difference. Describing Necessity, he says:

> Nor the events enchaining every will,
> That from the depths of unrecorded time
> Have drawn all-influencing virtue, pass
> Unrecognized or unforeseen by thee,
>
> . . . . . .
> . . . . the slave,
> Whose horrible lusts spread misery o'er the world,
> And the good man, who lifts, with virtuous pride,

His being in the sight of happiness,
That springs from his own works; the poison-tree,
Beneath whose shade all life is withered up,
And the fair oak, whose leafy dome affords
A temple where the vows of happy love
Are registered, are equal in thy sight:
Nor love, nor hate thou cherishest; revenge
And favouritism, and worst desire of fame
Thou know'st not: all that the wide world contains
Are but thy passive instruments, and thou
Regard'st them all with an impartial eye,
Whose joy or pain thy nature cannot feel,
Because thou hast not human sense,
Because thou art not human mind. (VI, 186-219.)

This passage may be placed beside his description of the Fairy Queen:

'I am the Fairy Mab: to me 'tis given
The wonders of the human world to keep:
The secrets of the immeasurable past,
In the unfailing consciences of men,
Those stern, unflattering chroniclers, I find:
The future from the causes which arise
In each event, I gather: not the sting
Which retributive memory implants
In the hard bosom of the selfish man;
Nor that extatic and exulting throb
Which virtue's votary feels when he sums up
The thoughts and actions of a well-spent day,
Are unforeseen, unregistered by me:
And it is yet permitted me, to rend
The veil of mortal frailty, that the spirit,
Clothed in its changeless purity, may know
How soon to accomplish the great end
For which it hath its being, and may taste
The peace, which in the end all life will share.
This is the meed of virtue; happy Soul,
Ascend the car with me! ' (I, 166-187.)

Both Necessity and Queen Mab are, as it were, the eye of the universe so that no event passes "unrecognized or unforeseen" ("Unforeseen, unregistered") by them. What is permitted, however, to Queen Mab is "to rend/ The veil of mortal frailty". To Queen Mab is given the power, says

Shelley in another passage,

> The wonders of the human world to keep,
> And fancy's thin creations to endow
> With manner, being, and reality.
> (VII, 61-63.)

Her eye, unlike the eye of Necessity, is not indifferent; it is imaginative. The world of Necessity, which is both senseless and mindless, she endows "with manner, being and reality." She is then what Shelley was later to call "the awful shadow of some unseen Power",[32] the image of Intellectual Beauty, the first poetic realization of those "visitations of the divinity in Man" which "turns all things to loveliness".

What was actually going on within Shelley during the composition of Queen Mab he was not yet in a position to explain. One of the results of composition, says Shelley in his Defense, is that, quite apart from its effect on the world, "it equally creates for us a being within our being."[33] This being, he was later to define as man's ideal image of himself, his archetypal form. Gradually, through the release of his own psychic powers, which came with those "inspired moments" when the mind is awakened to a "transitory brightness",[34] he gained that consciousness of himself as a poet which led to a new dedication of his powers, a re-direction of his talents from that of a social reformer in the narrow sense to that of an apocalyptic poet. From this point of view, Shelley's whole career as a poet

can be interpreted as the process whereby he came to know himself not as a creature of flesh, but as an immortal soul. And when the process was complete he returned to the "abode where the Eternal are."[35]

Speaking of the intuition that quickens the shaping spirit of the imagination, Shelley, in his Defense, compares the whole process to the development of the child in the womb of the mother. "This instinct or intuition of the poetical faculty", he says,

> is still more observable in the plastic and pictorial arts; a great statue or picture grows under the power of the artist as a child in the mother's womb; and the very mind which directs the hands in formation is incapable of accounting to itself for the origin, the gradations, or the media of the process.[36]

On the basis of this analogy, the "visitations of the divinity in Man" (the Muse) is the father of the poem, the poet is the mother and the poem is the offspring. The offspring is that which is actualized by the shaping spirit of the imagination. It is the "being within our being" like the child in the mother's womb. And this being is the poet's ideal self, a creature not of the flesh but of the spirit which lives, therefore, not in the world of the flesh (the world of matter in motion) but in the world of the spirit. When Shelley speaks of the poet as a divine being rather than a human being, he is referring to what the poet creates; the poem is the divine being and the poet, in the act of composition, lives in the poem.

For the poet as poet, therefore, the world of the spirit is more real than the world of the flesh. Indeed, the world of the flesh serves for the poet the same function as the womb of the mother. The whole realm of nature exists simply for the purpose of providing the womb in which the child of the spirit can evolve. What is brought forth from the womb of nature is a new creation. What that new creation is in itself cannot be described for reasons that are analogical to the impossibility of describing this world to the child in the womb. This new creation, therefore, can only be an analogia visionis, a vision of nature transfigured pointing in two directions: toward nature and toward that which transcends nature.

Just as the child, as it grows up, comes to recognize that he is the off-spring of his father's flesh and seeks atonement (at-one-ment) with the father in himself becoming a father, thereby uniting, as it were, with his own origin, so the soul, by analogy, seeks also atonement with its spiritual father that it may unite with its source. Just as the child, as it were, descends from the father into the womb of the mother and returns ultimately to the father, so also, by analogy, the soul descends from its divine father into the womb of nature and ultimately returns to him. Probably, some such analogical thinking as this suggested the idea of the soul's pre-existence, its

birth into this world, and its return to that realm of pre-existence.

This somewhat mystical speculation has been dealt with here because the pattern of the One descending into the world of the Many and its ultimate return to the One provides the anagogical level upon which Shelley's whole poetic career can be viewed as the unfolding of a single vision. And this anagogical level, which Shelley brought more and more into focus as his own powers developed, is adumbrated in Queen Mab. At the very end of the poem, after the Fairy Queen has given Ianthe her cosmic vision and her soul is about to return to her body, the Daemon says:

> Yet, human Spirit! bravely hold thy course,
> Let virtue teach thee firmly to pursue
> The gradual paths of an aspiring change:
> For birth and life and death, and that strange state
> Before the naked soul has found its home,
> All tend to perfect happiness, and urge
> The restless wheels of being on their way,
> Whose flashing spokes, instinct with infinite life,
> Bicker and burn to gain their destined goal:
> For birth but wakes the spirit to the sense
> Of outward shows, whose unexperienced shape
> New modes of passion to its flame may lend;
> Life is its state of action, and the store
> Of all events is aggregated there
> That variegate the eternal universe;
> Death is a gate of dreariness and gloom,
> That leads to azure isles and beaming skies,
> And happy regions of eternal hope.
> (IX, 146-163.)

Before Shelley could bring this anagogical level, implicit in the vision of Queen Mab, into focus, however, he had many discoveries to make. At the age of twenty, not yet

weaned from D'Holbach's materialism, he could hardly be expected to remove the veil from the mystery of "birth, life and death." Suffice that in 1812 he recognized that life is but the spirit's "state of action" in the world of Becoming and that his vision of the golden age is but the analogue of those "happy regions of eternal hope" from which the soul perhaps descended ("that strange state", he calls it) and to which it returns through "the gate of dreariness and gloom".

In 1816, after the completion of Alastor (in which the poet's creative faculty fails so that he sinks to an "untimely grave"), Shelley revised Queen Mab, reducing it to a two-part vision which he called The Daemon of the World. A comparison of the two poems will reveal the way in which Shelley's powers were developing. What Shelley has done inThe Daemon of the World is to remove the evidences of D'Holbach's materialism and focus his attention, to the exclusion of all else, upon the major vision of Queen Mab. The dismal spectacle of the past and the present, he reduces to thirty lines at the end of the first part, while the entire second part is concerned with the vision of the "happy Earth" (IX, 127) now seen, through the eye of the imagination, as the "reality of Heaven" (IX, 127).

Two literary sources of Shelley's transfigured vision of the earth are Erasmus Darwin and John Frank Newton. On

July 28, 1811 Shelley writes to Hogg to say that he is amusing himself with reading Darwin, and on December 24, 1812, he writes to Mr. Clio Rickman, the bookseller, ordering, among other works, Darwin's Temple of Nature. John Newton's Return to Nature he refers to at some length in his Notes to, as well as in the text of, Queen Mab. Both of these authors present a vision of the universe and man's place in it from an extremely imaginative point of view, which provided Shelley with his first serious introduction to the world of myth.

As a "votary of Reason" Shelley considered myth simply as an expression of man's ignorance of the laws of Nature; reason, he believed, was the enemy of myth (and the imagination insofar as it expressed itself in mythological terms). Darwin, on the other hand, argued that myth and science were not natural enemies, and that it was the poet's function to present the world of the natural sciences in imaginative terms. The possibility of re-creating the natural world in terms of a mythological vision of it must have enormously appealed to Shelley, resolving as it did what he had considered to be the real dichotomy of reason and imagination.

In his Advertisement to The Botanic Garden, Darwin writes:

The general design of the following sheets is to enlist Imagination under the banner of Science; and to lead her

votaries from the looser analogies, which dress out the imagery of poetry, to the stricter ones, which form the ratiocination of philosophy. While their particular design is to induce the ingenious to cultivate the knowledge of Botany, by introducing them to the vestibule of that delightful science, and recommending to their attention the immortal works of the celebrated Swedish Naturalist, Linnaeus.[37]

Darwin, enlisting the imagination "under the banner of science", is, of course, still thinking of the imagination in the Neo-classical sense. The function of poetry is to present a truthful representation of the nature of reality; to this extent reason or judgment must be the guide. The purpose of the fancy is to create those fictions whereby the representation is rendered pleasing.[38] At the same time, it is also evident that Erasmus Darwin takes the imagination more seriously than most Neo-classical theorists. By suggesting that the votaries of imagination can be led "from the looser analogies, which dress out the imagery of poetry, to the stricter ones, which form the ratiocination of philosophy" he is implying that the dichotomy of reason as the organ of truth and fancy as the organ of fiction can be broken down. Imagination, however, he still subordinates to reason; his purpose in <u>The Botanical Garden</u> (his "particular design") is "to induce the ingenious to cultivate the knowledge of Botany". What his poem will do is make the instruction pleasing by enlisting the imagination. There is no suggestion of the Romantic view of the creative imagination as the organ of a higher truth than

the truth of reason.

What Darwin did for Shelley, therefore, was to initiate within him a mode of mental action which, as a "votary of Reason", he had temporarily abandoned. He introduced him to a world of speculative thought which engaged his imaginative powers.

In The Temple of Nature, Darwin's most ambitious poem in which he attempts to examine the origin of all life, the development of man and the whole cosmological pattern underlying that origin and development, he says (in his Preface) that the imaginative account is based on his knowledge of Orphism. "In the Eleusinian mysteries", he states, "the philosophy of the works of Nature, with the origin and progress of society, are believed to have been taught by allegoric scenery explained by the Hierophant to the initiated, which gave rise to the machinery of the following poem."[39] The poem, therefore, presents Darwin impressive knowledge of science in terms of the Orphic cosmological myth.

In the opening section of the poem, he invokes Immortal Love who holds the entire cosmos in her embrace. And the birth of Nature is described in terms of the Orphic egg which bursts, under the warming influence of love:

> Immortal Love! who ere the morn of Time,
> On wings outstretch'd, o'er Chaos hung sublime;
> Warm'd into life the bursting egg of Night,
> And gave young Nature to admiring Light! -

You! whose wide arms, in soft embraces hurl'd
Round the vast frame, connect the whirling world!
Whether immers'd in day, the Sun your throne,
You gird the planets in your silver zone;
Or warm, descending on ethereal wings,
The Earth's cold bosom with the beams of spring;
Press drop to drop, to atom atom bind,
Link sex to sex, or rivet mind to mind.
(I, 15-26.)

This vision of the universe held in the embrace of Love is, of course, the vision that Queen Mab reveals to the soul of Ianthe.

Spirit of Nature! here!
In this interminable wilderness
Of worlds, at whose immensity
Even soaring fancy staggers,
Here is thy fitting temple.
Yet not the lightest leaf
That quivers in the passing breeze
Is less instinct with thee:
Yet not the meanest worm
That lurks in graves and fattens on the dead
Less shares thy eternal breath.
Spirit of Nature! thou!
Imperishable as this scene,
Here is thy fitting temple.
(I, 264-277.)

When Darwin goes on to describe the temptation of Eve, as a result of which she was cast out from Eden, the temple of Nature, he says that man should not contemplate this dark side of reality, but rather fix his attention upon the unchanging and universal harmony. This dark side of life he presents in terms of the cave of Trophonius. It is the realm of death, Shelley's "gate of dreariness and gloom." Here is Darwin's description of it, quoted here because echoes of it can be found in Shelley's poetry

as late as Adonais:

> Deep-whelm'd beneath, in vast sepulchral caves,
> Oblivion dwells amid unlabell'd graves;
> The storied tomb, the laurell'd bust o'erturns,
> And shakes their ashes from the mould'ring urns.-
> . . . . . .
> While on white heaps of intermingled bones
> The muse of Melancholy sits and moans;
> Showers her cold tears o'er Beauty's early wreck,
> Spreads her pale arms, and bends her marble neck.
> (I, 112-124.)

Commenting in a foot-note on these descriptions of death, Darwin says:

Plutarch mentions, that prophecies of evil events were uttered from the cave of Trophonius; but the allegorical story, that whoever enters this cavern were never again seen to smile, seems to have been designed to warn the contemplative from considering too much the dark side of nature. Thus the ancient poet is said to have written a poem on the miseries of the world, and to have thence become so unhappy as to destroy himself. When we reflect on the perpetual destruction of organic life, we should also recollect, that it is perpetually renewed in other forms by the same materials, and thus the sum total of the happiness of the world continues undiminished; and that a philosopher may thus smile again on turning his eyes from the coffins of nature to her cradles.[40]

This vision of nature as the perpetual renewal of life is the vision that Shelley incorporated into his own poetry. Thus in a passage in Queen Mab, clearly anticipating the vision of the Ode to the West Wind, he says that just as the dead leaves fertilize with their own "loathsome rottenness" (V, 8) the land "they long deformed" (V, 12) so also out of the "suicidal selfishness. . . shall spring all virtue, all delight, all love" (V, 16-19). In other words:

> All things are recreated, and the flame
> Of consentaneous love inspires all life:

> The fertile bosom of the earth gives suck
> To myriads, who still grow beneath her care,
> Rewarding her with their pure perfectness:
> . . . . . .
> No storms deform the beaming brow of heaven,
> Nor scatter in the freshness of its pride
> The foliage of the ever verdant trees;
> But fruits are ever ripe, flowers ever fair,
> And autumn proudly bears her matron grace,
> Kindling a flush on the fair cheek of spring,
> Whose virgin bloom beneath the ruddy fruit
> Reflects its tint, and blushes into love.
> (VIII, 107-123.)

Such is the vision of nature revealed as the workings of "consentaneous love.". And Darwin's Temple of Nature provided the literary source.

John Frank Newton was as knowledgeable in "secret lore" as Darwin was. Himself a votary of the Orphic mysteries, his cosmological myth embraced the four ages of man based upon the Hindu Zodiac. This vision will be explored in some detail in the next chapter, where its influence upon Shelley is more evident. Among the Orphic purification rites was included abstinence from the eating of animal flesh. In the Orpnic myth, the fall of man (synonymous with the creation of man) was the result of the Titans devouring the body of Dionysus-Zagreus. The eating of flesh, therefore, is the entrance of sin into the world; to abstain from it, Newton argues in The Return to Nature, is to usher in the golden age. This thoroughly incredible argument Shelley spends nearly six pages justifying in his Notes to Queen Mab. The important thing,

however, is not that Newton turned Shelley into a vegetarian, but that, like Darwin, he introduced him to myth in such a way that he could take it seriously. Shelley's knowledge of Orphism, a knowledge which plays an important role in the shaping of his own apocalyptic vision, derives, in the first instance, from Darwin and Newton. His vision of the renovated world in Queen Mab has behind it, though still very much in the background, much of the mythological lore that he picked up from these two authors. The vision of the community of life in which the lion's nature is "as the nature of a lamb" (VIII, 128) and man, in turn no longer "slays the lamb that looks him in the face" (VIII, 212) is a vision that derives from Darwin's view of the great community of nature and from Newton's view of the way in which man shall be re-absorbed into that community. And behind both lies the Orphic cosmological myth. Shelley's reference to the soul's pre-existence, its passage into and through the world, and its ultimate return to its original home is the closest he comes to making actual use of the myth in the poem.

What is evident, therefore, in Queen Mab, is that Shelley is moving from one world of thought, rooted in the Enlightenment, into another world of thought rooted in myth. These two worlds meet head-on in the poem and the result is by no means a synthesis of the two. Yet, when the

various threads of thought are disentangled, it is possible to see in the poem the reflection of that vast shift of human thought in the latter part of the eighteenth century in which, out of the Enlightenment, the age of Romanticism emerged.

Viewed in terms of Shelley's own development, it is possible to see his mature vision adumbrated in the poem. The view of the creative imagination, its transfiguring power, is there. The world of myth underlying his apocalyptic vision is suggested. His imaginative synthesis of Orphism with the poetry of Plato and Christ, his doctrine of Eros in which he argues that the spirit of Orphism was reborn in the poetry of Dante and Petrarch - all of this development was to follow. In Queen Mab, however, Shelley is moving into that psychic dimension which he was destined to recognize as his proper domain. These were his own "realms of gold" out of which, in the smithy of his own soul, his apocalyptic vision was born. Nor can it be said that he left the rationalism of such men as Godwin behind; rather it should be said that he transfigured it into its imaginative form. His Prometheus can by no means be divorced from the early hopes that Godwin's Enquiry instilled into him. Ultimately, of course, much of what he learned from Godwin he did have to leave behind. Godwin's hopes rested with the future condition of man on earth.

Shelley, who lived all his life as a poet in the shadow of death, placed his ultimate hopes elsewhere. Nothing, he says in a letter to John Gisborne (April 10, 1822) is more appalling to him than Wordsworth's sentiment that this earth is the place where "We find our happiness, or not at all."[41] Even in Queen Mab, in which his apocalyptic vision is marred throughout by materialism, his thoughts were, in part at least, on death. Before Ianthe fell asleep beside Henry, they had been walking along the beach talking about death. The poem opens with a meditation upon death in which Shelley compares it to sleep. And what is revealed to Ianthe in sleep, he later implies in the poem, is analagous to what she shall know with death. The poem, therefore, not only adumbrates Prometheus Unbound; it adumbrates Adonais as well.

Finally, it is possible to discern in this first attempt at an apocalyptic vision various levels upon which the poem moves. The cycles of death and re-birth in nature provide the analogue of the death and re-birth of humanity. The death and re-birth of humanity, in turn, provides the analogue of man's descent from the One and his ultimate return to the One. As Shelley developed, these various levels became more and more clarified as, within himself, he came to understand the hierarchy of man's mental faculties. In his future efforts to present his apoca-

lyptic vision, his success is directly related to the degree to which the world of sense, reason and imagination were, within himself, harmoniously structured. His materialism, his conflict between reason and imagination in 1812 clearly demonstrate that the inner hierarchy was not yet defined. Queen Mab is the product of that confusion. Nevertheless, Shelley's later position is clearly implicit in the poem.

Chapter 6

THE REVOLT OF ISLAM

In Queen Mab, Ianthe asks the daemon when the "universal Spirit" (VI, 20) will "revivify this withered limb of Heaven" (VI, 21). The daemon replies:

> Some eminent in virtue shall start up,
> Even in perversest time:
> The truths of their pure lips, that never die,
> Shall bind the scorpion falsehood with a wreath
> Of ever-living flame,
> Until the monster sting itself to death.
> (VI, 31-38.)

These "eminent in virtue" quickened by "consentaneous love", which "inspires all life" (VIII, 108), will usher in the "morn of love" (IX, 38) and the earth will be recreated in the form of heaven. Such a one is Ianthe herself who, says the daemon, is "judged alone worthy of the envied boon,/ That waits the good and the sincere" (I, 123-124). Her supremacy among all the dwellers of the earth is suggested by the adoration of Henry who lies sleepless by her side and "waits to catch/ Light, life and rapture from her smile" (I, 29-30). And when the vision is complete, and the soul of Ianthe has reunited with her body,

Henry is described kneeling "in silence by her couch,/ Watching her sleep with looks of speechless love" (IX, 237 -238).

The kind of leadership which will gradually transform the natural and human world is, therefore, to be found in those who are united in love such as that shared by Ianthe and Henry. The truths that they utter can never die for they find their source in that animating spirit which sustains all life and binds the entire universe together in harmony and joy. The Revolt of Islam, begun six years after the completion of Queen Mab, focuses upon this undeveloped theme in the earlier poem.

The significance of this focus in The Revolt of Islam for Shelley's development as a poet is of the utmost importance. When Shelley wrote Queen Mab he considered himself primarily a political reformer rather than a poet. What consciously he attempted in the poem was to present a logical argument, based upon the doctrine of Necessity derived from Godwin and the philosophes, to show the inevitability of moral reformation attendant upon the rational progress that man had made through the advancement of the sciences. In the Preface to The Revolt of Islam, he is careful to reject this approach, not because it is not valid in itself, but because it is not the method of the of the poet. "I have made no attempt", he says, "to recommend the motives which I would substitute for those at

present governing mankind by methodical and systematic argument."[1] What he is concerned to do is to "awaken the feelings, so that the reader should see the beauty of true virtue".[2] And he is thus concerned because "it is the business of the Poet to communicate to others the pleasure and the enthusiasm arising out of those images and feelings, in the vivid presence of which within his own mind, consists at once his inspiration and his reward."[3]

In 1811 and 1812 Shelley was anxious to convince Godwin that his education had, in a quite special way, prepared him to become his disciple and share with him in the work of moral reform. In the Preface to The Revolt of Islam, he now views his education in a very different light, seeing in it the making of a poet. "There is an education peculiarly fitted to a poet," he says,

> without which, genius and sensibility can hardly fill the circle of their capacities. No education indeed can entitle to this appellation a dull and unobservant mind, or one, though neither dull nor unobservant, in which the channels of communication between thought and expression have been obstructed or closed. How far it is my fortune to belong to either of the latter classes, I cannot know. I aspire to be something better. The circumstances of my accidental education have been favourable to this ambition. I have been familiar from boyhood with mountains and lakes, and the sea, and the solitudes of forests: Danger, which sports upon the brink of precipices, has been my playmate. I have trodden the glaciers of the Alps, and lived under the eye of Mount Blanc. I have been a wanderer among distant fields. I have sailed down mighty rivers, and seen the sun rise and set, and the stars come forth, whilst I have sailed night and day down a rapid stream among mountains. I have seen populous cities, and have watched the passions which rise and spread, and sink and change, amongst assembled multitudes of men. I have seen the theatre of the more visible ravages of tyranny and

war. . . . I have conversed with living men of genius. The poetry of antient Greece and Rome, and modern Italy, and our own country, have been to me like external nature, a passion and an enjoyment. Such are the sources from which the materials for the imagery of my Poem have been drawn. I have considered Poetry in its most comprehensive sense, and have read the Poets and the Historians and the Metaphysicians whose writings have been accessible to me, and have looked upon the beautiful and majestic scenery of the earth as common sources of those elements which it is the province of the Poet to embody and combine. Yet the experience and the feelings to which I refer, do not in themselves constitute men Poets, but only prepare them to be auditors of those who are. How far I shall be found to possess that more essential attribute of Poetry, the power of awakening in others sensations like those which animate my own bosom, is that which, to speak sincerely, I know not; and which, with an acquiescent and contented spirit, I expect to be taught by the effect which I shall produce upon those whom I now address.[4]

What Shelley has to say about his own education for his poetic vocation is confirmed by Mary Shelley's note on The Revolt of Islam. "His inclinations", she says,

led him (he fancied) almost alike to poetry and to metaphysical discussions. I say "he fancied," because I believe the former to have been paramount, and that it would have gained the mastery even had he struggled against it. However, he said that he deliberated at one time whether he should dedicate himself to poetry or metaphysics, and resolving the former, he educated himself for it, discarding in a great measure his philosophical pursuits, and engaging himself in the study of the poets of Greece, Italy and England.[5]

In the dedication stanzas attached to the poem, addressed to Mary and largely autobiographical, Shelley retells the experiences recounted in the Hymn to Intellectual Beauty and Alastor, both completed before the composition of The Revolt of Islam. He speaks of the "hour which burst/ My spirit's sleep" (21-22) and led to the dedication of

his powers to the renovation of the world. He speaks also, in a manner that echoes his Preface to Alastor, of the years of "earnest thought" (37) following this experience in which he gathered knowledge "from forbidden mines of lore" (38). Finally, he says, "there came upon my mind/ A sense of loneliness, a thirst with which I pined" (44-45). This thirst, as he goes on to say, was a consuming desire to share his own inner universe with another. Seeking in vain for such a one

> . . . black despair,
> The shadow of a starless night, was thrown
> Over the world in which I moved alone.
> (48-50.)

In the midst of this dark night of the soul in which his heart was "but a lifeless clod" (54) - the theme of Alastor - he found his soul-mate, Mary, who revived his spirit and quickened his powers. Thus, he concludes:

> No more alone through the world's wilderness,
> Although I trod the paths of high intent,
> I journeyed now: no more companionless,
> Where solitude is like despair, I went -
> There is the wisdom of a stern content
> When Poverty can blight the just and good,
> When Infamy dares mock the innocent,
> And cherished friends turn with the multitude
> To trample: this was ours, and we unshaken stood.
> (64-72.)

The dedication stanzas addressed to Mary Shelley not only re- state the theme of the two earlier poems but also provide a key to the understanding of the poem itself. Both the Hymn to Intellectual Beauty and Alastor deal with

subjective experiences; the former concludes with the poet's dedication of his powers to the cause of moral renovation, the latter deals with the "untimely death" of the poet as a result of his failure to realize on earth and in human form the feminine counterpart of his own psychic vision of his ideal self. In Mary that feminine counterpart was found; she is, Shelley implies in his dedication, the incarnation of Intellectual Beauty, the realization of what the poet in Alastor fails to find. As a result, his own psychic powers have, through his love for Mary, quickened that "wider sympathy" without which his brightest hopes for the redemption of mankind would eventually prove barren. The poet has within himself the model or prototype of an ideal world in terms of which he can now set forth to renovate the fallen world. Hence the poem is simultaneously an account of an ideal revolution which corrects the excesses of the French Revolution and "a succession of pictures illustrating the growth and progress of individual mind aspiring after excellence, and devoted to the love of mankind".[6] This latter emphasis gives the poem a cohesion that is lacking in Queen Mab.

What Shelley attempts, therefore, in The Revolt of Islam is to present Eros as a cosmic force operative not only in the relationship between the sexes as embodied in Laon and Cythna, but within the social organism as well,

both of which, in turn, reflect or participate in that animating force making for harmony in the universe. In terms of the materialism of Queen Mab, all humanity, whether good or evil, is viewed as the passive instrument of Necessity. In The Revolt of Islam, Necessity becomes Eros and man's relationship to this power becomes active rather than passive. The centre of interest shifts, from a blind force controlling the universal scheme, to man as a centre of sacrificial love working for the resurrection of the entire human race. "I have chosen", Shelley says in the Preface," a story of human passion in its most universal character. . . and appealing in contempt of all artificial opinions or institutions, to the common sympathies in every human breast."[7] In Laon and Cythna, Shelley, as it were, has brought Henry and Ianthe from the background to the foreground. They are no longer observers but initiators and participators.

In The Revolt of Islam, Shelley makes his "first serious appeal to the Public".[8] The term "Public", however, he uses in a restricted sense; it is "the tribunal from which Milton received his crown of immortality".[9] It is, therefore, essentially the same "Public" that he addresses in Prometheus Unbound. "My purpose ", he says in the Preface to that poem, "has hitherto been simply to familiarize the highly refined imagination of the more select

classes of poetical readers with beautiful idealisms of moral excellence".[10] In opposition to this special audience, he places those critics who judge poetry according to the false standards of neo-classical taste and expect that poetry should merely reflect and give support to the existing state of society. "It is", he says in the Preface,

> the misfortune of this age, that its Writers, too thoughtless of immortality, are exquisitely sensible to temporary praise or blame. They write with the fear of Reviews before their eyes. This system of criticism sprang up in that torpid interval when Poetry was not. Poetry, and the art which professes to regulate and limit its powers, cannot subsist together. Longinus could not have been the contemporary of Homer, nor Boileau of Horace. Yet this species of criticism never presumed to assert an understanding of its own: it has always, unlike true science, followed, not preceded, the opinion of mankind, and would even now bribe with worthless adulation some of our greatest Poets to impose gratuitous fetters on their own imaginations, and become unconscious accomplices in the daily murder of all genius either not so aspiring or not so fortunate as their own. I have sought therefore to write, as I believe and Homer, Shakespeare, and Milton wrote, with an utter disregard of anonymous censure.[11]

As a poet, writing within a clearly defined tradition, Shelley asserts his position. In this sense, The Revolt of Islam is the first long poem belonging to his poetic maturity. To examine some of the literary influences at work within the poem itself, therefore, is to come to grips with some of the forces at work upon the poet between the composition of Queen Mab and The Revolt of Islam. To understand those forces and the way in which Shelley shaped them according to the dictates of his own imagination is to

uncover the nature of his own scheme of salvation, the character of his own apocalyptic vision, of which The Revolt of Islam is the second, though still imperfect, realization.

Shelley's growing dissatisfaction with Godwin's scheme is apparent after his return from Ireland in 1812. The kind of disciplined study that Godwin was anxious for Shelley to undertake did not appeal to him. Godwin distrusted Shelley's imagination. His predilection for giving expression to the ultimate hopes for mankind which he found in Godwin's philosophy, Godwin viewed with profound distrust, believing that it was not in the best interests of human progress. But Shelley held his ground, and when Godwin wrote to him expressing his utter dislike of The Revolt of Islam, Shelley, though still expressing his respect for Godwin, took exception to everything he had to say concerning the poem, in particular, and the nature of his powers, in general. His letter to Godwin is worth quoting at length for it shows the degree to which he had emancipated himself from his early discipleship.

I have read and considered all that you say about my general powers, and the particular instance of the Poem in which I have attempted to develop them. Nothing can be more satisfactory to me than the interest which your admonitions express. But I think you are mistaken in some points with regard to the peculiar nature of my powers, whatever be their amount. I listened with deference and self-suspicion to your censures of "Laon and Cythna;" but productions of mine which you commend hold a very low place in my own esteem; and this reassured me, in some degree at least. The poem was produced by a series of thoughts which filled my mind with unbounded and sustained

enthusiasm. . . . I never presumed indeed to consider it anything approaching to faultless, but when I considered contemporary productions of the same apparent pretensions, I will own that I was filled with confidence. I felt that in many respects it was a genuine picture of my own mind. I felt that the sentiments were true, not assumed. And in this have I long believed that my power consists in sympathy and that part of imagination which relates to sentiment and contemplation. I am formed, if for anything not in common with the herd of mankind, to apprehend minute and remote distinction of feeling, whether relative to external nature, or the living beings which surround us, and to communicate the conceptions which result from considering either the moral or the material universe as a whole. Of course I believe these faculties, which perhaps comprehend all that is sublime in man, to exist very imperfectly in my own mind. But when you advert to my Chancery paper, a cold, forced, unimpassioned, insignificant piece of cramped and cautious argument; and to the little scrap about Mandeville, which expressed my feelings indeed, but cost scarcely two minutes [sic] thought to express, as specimens of my powers, more favourable than that which grew as it were from "the agony and bloody sweat" of intellectual travail - surely I must feel that in some manner, either I am mistaken in believing that I have any talent at all, or you in the selection of the specimens of it.[12]

What Shelley is here telling Godwin is that he is a poet, and that, as a poet, Godwin has little or no comprehension of his powers. He is, therefore, altogether unable to accept Godwin's estimate of him and must, without Godwin's sanction, continue to pursue his own course in poetry which will provide a true picture of his own development. So far as any direct influence upon the direction of Shelley's future development is concerned, Godwin and he have parted company.

This profound change in Shelley's career is, in part, the result of his discovery of the literature of

Italy, England, classical antiquity and the Bible and, in part, the result of the new group of friends which he made in 1812. In the latter category John Newton and Peacock must be given priority. What he gained from these two men was an approach to this literature, an understanding of its esoteric content which provided him with a visionary form that, under the influence of Plato, reached its maturity and defined his apocalyptic vision.

In his Memoirs of Shelley, Peacock describes a visit to Shelley at Bracknell in the summer of 1813. The society which surrounded Shelley at Bracknell was a source of some amusement to Peacock and inspired the satirical, yet sympathetic, novel, Nightmare Abbey. As he describes it in the Memoirs, the group emerges as something of a cult, which indeed it was. "At Bracknell," Peacock says,

> Shelley was surrounded by a numerous society, all in a great measure of his own opinions in relation to religion and politics, and the larger portion of them in relation to vegetable diet. But they wore their rue with a difference. Every one of them adopting some of the articles of the faith of their general church, had each nevertheless some predominant crotchet of his or her own, which left a number of open questions for earnest and not always temperate discussion.[13]

The most memorable member of this society, other than Shelley, was Newton, whose ideas appear to have been the main inspiration of the whole group. Peacock goes on, therefore, to give a rather exact account, judging from Newton's own writings, of his ideas. "He was", says Peacock,

an estimable man and an agreeable companion, and he was not the less amusing that he was the absolute impersonation of a single theory, or rather of two single theories rolled into one. He held that all diseases and all aberrations, moral and physical, had their origin in the use of animal food and of fermented and spirituous liquors; that the universal adoption of a diet of roots, fruits, and distilled water, would restore the golden age of universal health, purity and peace; that this most ancient and sublime morality was mystically inculcated in the most ancient Zodiac, which was that of Dendera; that this Zodiac was divided into two hemispheres, the upper hemisphere being the realm of Oromazes or the principle of good, the lower that of Ahrimanes or the principle of evil; that each of these hemispheres was again divided into two compartments, and the four lines of division radiating from the centre were the prototype of the Christian cross. The two compartments of Oromazes were those of Uranus or Brahma the Creator, and of Saturn or Veishnu the Preserver. The two compartments of Ahrimanes were those of Jupiter or Seva the Destroyer, and of Apollo or Krishna the Restorer. The great moral doctrine was thus symbolized in the Zodiacal signs: - In the first compartment, Taurus the Bull, having in the ancient Zodiac a torch in his mouth, was the type of eternal light. Cancer the Crab was the type of celestial matter, sleeping under the all-covering water, on which Brahma floated in a lotus-flower for millions of ages. From the union, typified by Gemini, of light and celestial matter, issued in the second compartment Leo, Primogenial Love, mounted on the back of a Lion, who produced the pure and perfect nature of things in Virgo, and Libra the Balance denoted the coincidence of the eliptic with the equator, and the equality of man's happy existence. In the third compartment, the first entrance of evil into the system was typified by the change of celestial into terrestrial matter - Cancer into Scorpio. Under this evil influence man became a hunter, Sagittarius the Archer, and pursued the wild animals, typified by Capricorn. Then, with animal food and cookery, came death into the world, and all our woe. But in the fourth compartment, Dhanwantari or Aesculapius, Aquarius the Waterman, arose from the sea, typified by Pisces the Fish, with a jug of pure water and a bunch of fruit, and brought back the period of universal happiness under Aries the Ram, whose benignant ascendancy was the golden fleece of the Argonauts, and the true talisman of Oromazes.[14]

When Shelley speaks, in the dedication stanzas, of heaping "knowledge from forbidden mines of lore" and arming

his soul with "that secret store" it would appear that he has in mind the kind of intellectual activity that took place at Bracknell. What he found in Newton's Zodiacal philosophy was a cosmological myth which embraced the past, present and future condition of man and, at the same time, held out a hope for the future renovation of the world. Here then was a visionary form within which Godwin's doctrines would lose their inherent abstractness and take on a new and poetic life within the imagination. Newton's philosophy was, in some respects, the imaginative form of Godwinism and for this reason he shared most of Shelley's radical political and religious views. The revolutionary implications of the myth can be seen by Newton's own account of it in his article in the Monthly Magazine for March, 1812. While, he argues, the world is at present under the control of Sagittarius in the third compartment of the Zodiac, yet the spirit of good continues to influence certain minds so that men are not destitute of hope. And this hope is an augury of the age that must soon be ushered in. Here is his own account of the allegorical significance of the Hindu Zodiac:

Taurus, or the Ethereal Fire, impregnates in Gemini, the Crab or Chaos. So united, their energy is significantly expressed by the Lion, who rules the second division as the Bull does the first. The Lion creates nature, typified by Virgo, existing under the dominion of Justice, in Libra. The other half of the zodiac commences with the destructive power of Scorpio. His attendants are the hunter Sagittarius, and Capricorn, the symbol of death to

the inferior animals. But, as Hope has never abandoned the earth, that precious gift which the Almighty in his beneficence has conferred upon mankind, the great Dew of India, Dhanavantara, presents himself with his urn of amreeta, and dominates in the last compartment of the circle.[15]

So far as Newton was concerned the Hindu Zodiac should be regarded "as the basis of all heathen mythology and poetry."[16] As Peacock says in his Memoirs of Shelley, "he saw the Zodiac in everything."[17] And he saw it because it contained the entire history of mankind. To the quadruple division of the signs belong "the four heads of Brahma, Vishnu, Siva, and Krishna" which embody, according to Newton, the "four principal ideas, which have descended in triumph down the stream of Time, transfusing themselves through man's intellectual horizon."[18] Those ideas are "Creation, Preservation, Destruction, Renovation."[19]

Doubtless, therefore, Newton attempted to persuade Shelley that his Zodiacal philosophy was the key to an understanding of the great mythopoeic literature of the world, and that once he had grasped its meaning all literature of a mythical nature would be recognized as a single cyclic poem, the origin of which was to be found in the ancient religion of India with its off-shoots in Buddhism and Zoroastrianism. For the young Shelley, with his passion for the esoteric, which had suffered a two-year interruption as a result of Godwin and the philosophes, Newton's philosophy must have come as a revelation, re-quick-

ening his psychic powers and igniting his imagination. The new golden a e which he describes in Queen Mab is largely derived from Newton, and, like Newton, he believed that it would come with the universal acceptance of vegetable diet.

That he further accepted Newton's interpretation of heathen myths is evident from his discussion of Prometheus in the Notes to that same poem. There Shelley argues that Prometheus introduced animal diet from which corruption, both mental and physical, followed for the entire human race. This view of the Promethean myth is derived directly from Newton's The Return to Nature. In his articles in the Monthly Magazine, however, Newton is not simply concerned to argue the virtues of vegetable diet; he is concerned to show, on the basis of his examination of a variety of myths, that he regards "the mystic theology of the Brahmins as the source of Greek mythology."[20] This latter intention is of far greater significance: Shelley's conversion to a vegetable diet is of little consequence; his conversion to Greek mythopoeic literature changed the whole course of his career. And the nature of his conversation, under the influence of Newton who explained all myth in terms of the esoteric tradition of Oriental mysticism, provided an initial impulse which led him to work out in his mature vision a scheme of salvation

culminating in Nirvana.

To understand the influence of Newton's Zodiacal philosophy upon the composition of The Revolt of Islam, it is first necessary to compare Shelley's poem with Peacock's fragment, Ahrimanes. Peacock's fragment, as he himself points out, derives primarily from Newton's articles in the Montnly Magazine.[21] In the finished sixteen stanzas of the first version, he presents the four phases of Newton's zodiacal philosophy: El Oran, the Creator unfurls his banner of light over chaos and brings forth the glowing infant world ruled by the heavenly lion, Primordial Love. When the destined period of his rule is over, Oromaze, the Preserver, assumes control and man, not yet doomed to toil, wanders free upon the earth. There follows the reign of Ahrimanes in which man becomes a hunter and the earth is laid waste. Meanwhile Oromaze retires to the southern extremity of the globe and, from its impenetrable bowers, sends forth his genii to quicken hope and prepare the way for the coming of Mithra, the Renovator.

Here the fragment of the first version breaks off. The larger prose outline repeats the same zodiacal myth and goes on to describe the catastrophic adventures of two lovers, Darassah and Kelasris, who are the messengers of Oromazes bringing hope to a world under the control of

Ahrimanes. From the prose outline, it is evident that the epic adventure of these two lovers, set within the mythological framework of Newton's zodiac, was meant to provide the larger narrative portion of the poem. After surviving shipwreck, volcanoes, imprisonment, famine and pestilence, they are deemed worthy to participate in the happiness of the southern world. The poem, therefore, was to end with an account of the journey to the southern climes and a prophecy of the new age which must inevitably follow.

Peacock's second version of Ahrimanes is an expansion of the earlier attempt. Instead of two parts, he now outlined a plan for twelve cantos, of which he finished the first (30 stanzas) and about half (14 stanzas) of the second. The mythological framework of the first version he simplifies by reducing the four zodiacal phases to two: Oromaze and Ahrimanes. The first canto opens with Darassah standing by a moonlit sea out of which emerges a beautiful female genius. In his description of her rising from the sea, holding a wand in her right hand, Peacock has in mind the zodiacal symbol of Aquarius the Waterman who rises from the ocean depths bearing a jug of pure water and a bunch of fruit. Aquarius thus arising symbolizes the return to the universal happiness which belonged to the period in which Taurus penetrates chaos with his celestial

light and brings forth Primogenial Love. Thus, when he describes the female genius, he compares her to the "Primordial love" which "sprang o'er the infant year."[22]

The female genius asks Darassah why he is mourning, and he replies that he is lamenting the passing of the reign of Oromazes. The female genius explains that Ahrimanes is now in control of the world. All power now proceeds from him for Oromazes has found a nameless grave. She then proceeds to describe the reign of Oromazes:

> Favour to few, to many wrath he shews:
> None with impunity his power may brave.
> Two classes only of mankind he knows,
> The lord and serf - the tyrant and the slave.
> Some hermit-sage, where lonely torrents rave,
> May muse and dream of Oromazes still:
> Despised he lives, and finds a nameless grave.
> The chiefs and monarchs of the world fulfil
> Great Ahrimanes' behests - the creatures of his will.
> (XXVII.)

She therefore bids Darassah become a votary of Oromazes and "blaze forth conspicuous in the fields of fight" (XXVIII). She will, in turn, re-unite him with Kelasris, with whom he had spent his happy childhood and from whom he was now separated owing to the intervention of her father. Darassah accepts the offer of the female genius; he is re-united with Kelasris and the two of them sail from the Araxian isle.

The second canto opens with a meditation concerning the condition of the world during the reign of Oromazes. The author consoles himself by the thought that in certain

breasts Oromazes "still exerts his mild control:"

> Yet if on earth a single spot there be,
> Where fraud, corruption, selfishness and pride
> Wear not the specious robes of sanctity,
> With hypocritic malice to divide
> The bonds of love and peace by nature tied
> 'Twixt man and man, far as the billows roll,-
> Where idle tales, that truth and sense deride,
> Claim no dominion o'er the subject soul;-
> There Oromazes still exerts his mild control.
> (II.)

As the Canto develops, Darassah grows ambitious, having yielded to the temptation of the evil genius in disguise as a votary of Mithra (for whom he originally mistakes her). Kelasris, on the other hand, is finally revealed as an Oromazian sub-diety in disguise. Apart from this added complication, the prose outline of the second version follows, more or less, the outline of the first.

In the overall pattern of The Revolt of Islam, Shelley is indebted to Peacock's Ahrimanes; he follows Peacock in recounting the adventures of two lovers, united from early childhood, culminating (following Peacock's first version) in spiritual victory over the force of evil, and in setting this narrative within a mythological framework involving (following Peacock's second version) the conflict between the spirit of good and the spirit of evil. In the actual detail of the poem, Shelley is also indebted to Peacock's verses. The Revolt of Islam opens with a youth who climbs a promontory to mourn the failure of the French Revolution. The parallel with Darassah mourning

the condition of the world as a result of the passing of the reign of Oromazes is evident. As he stands there, he observes an air-battle between an eagle and a snake and then descends to the sea-shore where he encounters a beautiful maiden who explains to him the significance of the battle. Her explanation parallels the female genius's account in Ahrimanes of the conflict between Oramazes and Ahrimanes. Both speakers conclude that the evil spirit is now in control. Because, however, the female genius in Ahrimanes is an evil spirit in disguise she cannot prophesy the ultimate triumph of Oramazes; hence, the author himself, in the second stanza of the second Canto, voices some of the sentiments that Shelley places in the mouth of the beautiful maiden.

Unlike Peacock's first Canto of the second version of Ahrimanes, Shelley's first Canto is purely introductory. The youth joins the beautiful maiden in "a boat of rare device" (I, 200) and travels with her and the snake, which came up out of the water and coiled itself in her embrace, to a magnificent temple where the departed heroes of the world sit upon thrones, one of which stands vacant. As the youth looks on, the woman dissolves into a darkness that fills the temple. The eyes of the serpent move in darkness along the floor, mingle and glow like a mighty planet beneath which sits a male form on the erstwhile

empty throne. Two other forms, Laon and Cythna, who have just entered the Temple having met on earth a martyr's death, also appear and, as the Canto ends, the youth is about to be told their story. The final twenty-five stanzas of the last Canto complete the first mythological one by telling of how, after their death, they were transported to the Temple of the Spirit as a reward for their noble deeds on earth.

Shelley's intention in writing The Revolt of Islam was obviously far more serious than Peacock's. In his Preface he describes the poem as a "succession of pictures illustrating the growth and progress of individual mind aspiring after excellence, and devoted to the love of mankind." And in his letter to Godwin (December II, 1817) he says that he "felt that it was in many ways a genuine picture of my own mind." The poem, therefore, is an attempt on Shelley's part to evoke the sympathy of the "Public" for his own most cherished beliefs in the hope that these beliefs, presented not didactically but in a moving narrative, might kindle

> within the bosoms of my readers, a virtuous enthusiasm for those doctrines of liberty and justice, that faith and hope in something good, which neither violence, nor misrepresentation, nor prejudice, can ever totally extinguish among mankind."[23]

Peacock's fragment and prose outline show no evidence of such "high seriousness."

Specifically what Shelley had in mind in the composition of his poem was the apparent failure of the French Revolution. The poem opens with the youth awakening "from visions of despair" (I, 3) because "the last hope of trampled France had failed/ Like a brief dream of unremaining glory" (I, 2-3). And in the Preface he deals, at some length, with the causes of the failure and the effects of that failure upon "the worshippers of public good."[24] To rectify that effect, he says, is his reason for writing the poem.

> But, on the first reverses of hope in the progress of French liberty, the sanguine eagerness for good overleapt the solution of these questions, and for a time extinguished itself in the unexpectedness of their result. Thus many of the most ardent and tender-hearted of the worshippers of public good have been morally ruined by what a partial glimpse of the events they deplored, appeared to shew as the melancholy desolation of all their cherished hopes. Hence gloom and misanthropy have become the characteristic of the age in which we live, the solace of a disappointment that unconsciously finds relief only in the wilful exaggeration of its own despair. This influence has tainted the literature of the age with the hopelessness of the minds from which it flows. . . . But mankind appears to me to be emerging from their trance. I am aware, methinks, of a slow, gradual, silent change. In that belief I have composed the following Poem.[25]

Viewed in the light of his public intention, therefore, the youth, in the opening stanza of the first Canto, awakening "from visions of despair" is expressive of Shelley's belief that "mankind appears. . . to be emerging from their trance." And, in the story of Laon and Cythna, through which the youth is instructed, Shelley pictures "the slow,

gradual, silent change" of which he was himself aware. In Queen Mab, Shelley speaks of man's being defining each movement of the "gradual renovation" (VIII, 143) on his mind. In The Revolt of Islam, however, the gradual process is dramatized in the narrative and in the mythological framework within which the narrative is set.

Shelley, therefore, is conscious of his task as an epic poet addressing his own fallen race, restoring to them those ideals and hopes which have, momentarily at least, been eclipsed. Confronted by this epic undertaking, he obviously had other epic poets in mind; his poem, he says, is to be judged by the same tribunal "from which Milton received his crown of immortality." And it is with Milton's epic in mind that he makes use of the serpent symbol to stand for the eternal spirit of good.

His choice of the snake as the symbol of good may, considering his presentation of the myth in the first Canto, have been influenced by his reading of the first Canto of Ahrimanes (second version). Peacock here presents a complete inversion of good and evil. The messenger of Ahrimanes first appears in the guise of a "votary of Mithra", for which Darassah at first mistakes her. While the people appear to call upon God in the name Oromazes, they are, in reality, calling upon Ahrimanes, the avenging god. And priests and prophets do precisely the same thing.

For him on earth unnumbered temples rise,
And altars burn, and bleeding victims die:
Albeit the sons of men his name disguise
In other names, that choice or chance supply,
To him alone their incense soars on high.
The god of armies - the avenging god -
Seeva or Allah - Jove or Mars - they cry:
'Tis Ahrimanes still that wields the rod;
To him all nature bends, and trembles at his nod.

Yea, even on Oromazes' self they call,
But Ahrimanes hears their secret prayer.
Not in the name that from the lips may fall,
But in the thought the heart's recesses bear,
The sons of earth the power they serve declare.
Wherever priests awake the battle-strain,
And bid the torch of persecution glare,
And curses ring along the vaulted fane -
Call on what name they may - their god is Ahrimane.
(XXV-XXVI.)

This inversion of good and evil, in which Ahrimanes is triumphant and rules in the name of religion while Oromazes "finds a nameless grave", parallels Shelley's own myth in The Revolt of Islam. When the first man stood alone "on the verge of chaos"(I, 227), the maiden tells the youth, two meteors - "a blood-red Comet and the Morning Star" (I, 230) - mingled their beams in battle and the sole dweller, "in dreadful sympathy" (I, 233), became a centre of conflict within himself, one thought warring with another. Finally the Morning Star fell and the "earliest dweller" (I, 226) killed his brother. The blood-red Comet, spirit of evil, thus assumed control and "the new race of man went to and fro,/ Famished and homeless, loathed and loathing" (I, 239-240). The Morning Star, he changed "from starry shape, beauteous and mind,/ To a dire Snake"

(I, 241-242), so that all men cursed the spirit of good. None henceforth knew good from evil for the natural order had been reversed. From this monstrous perversion of good and evil arose kings and religion that filled the earth with war and tyranny. In calling upon God, men call upon the spirit of evil.

Shelley's favorite prophet in the Old Testament was Isaiah and, as his essay On the Devil, and Devils proves, he was familiar with the prophet's account of the Assyrian king which he compares to the fall of Lucifer, the Morning Star. This passage, as the myth in The Revolt of Islam suggests, Shelley interprets in terms of Newton's Zodiacal philosophy concerning the passage from the second to the third compartment of the zodiac. In Isaiah there is no suggestion that Lucifer is Satan; this was the invention of the Church fathers who equated the fall of Satan in Revelation with the fall of Lucifer in Isaiah, and identified him with the serpent who tempts Eve in Genesis. Of this Christian invention, Shelley, as he points out in his essay On the Devil, and Devils, was thoroughly aware. In reality, he argues, the snake is an "auspicious and favorable being"[26] and an "hieroglyphic of eternity,"[27] but "the Christians have turned this Serpent into their Devil, and accommodated the whole story to their new scheme of sin and propitiation, &c."[28]

The rise of the Christian church, therefore, is the reign of the spirit of evil and its God is the Ahrimanes of Peacock. The snake, on the other hand, is the debased form which this tyrant God forces the Morning Star - the light-bearing Taurus of Newton's zodiac - to assume. To rehabilitate Lucifer from this debased form into which the spirit of evil has thrust him, therefore, symbolizes the triumph of good over evil. From the mythological point of view, this is precisely what Shelley does in the first Canto of The Revolt of Islam. In the Temple of the Spirit the snake, in the midst of darkness, undergoes a metamorphosis and appears as a radiant male form with the Morning Star shining above his head.

What Shelley has done, therefore, in The Revolt of Islam is to complete the process of rehabilitating Satan which Milton, so he believed, had begun in Paradise Lost. Newton and Peacock had provided him with the mythological framework within which to accomplish this feat. And this mythological framework is the imaginative form of Shelley's attack upon Christianity, and the corrupt institutions to which it gave rise, in Queen Mab. In this fact alone, The Revolt of Islam shows an enormous advance over the crude poetic immaturity of Queen Mab.

Mythologically, therefore, the theme of The Revolt of Islam is the rehabilitation of Lucifer. Lucifer, in

turn, is the archetypal image of Eros, the creator of Primogenial Love who, in Newton's Hindu Zodiac, is the "Taurine Bacchus". The two lovers, Laon and Cythna, are the votaries of Lucifer and, at the same time, an ideal portrait of the relationship between Shelley and Mary. To the extent, then, that The Revolt of Islam is what Shelley defined as "a genuine portrait of my own mind", it is clear that in Dionysus, the "Taurine Bacchus" of Newton and the Lucifer of the Old Testament, he discovered the archetypal image of himself. The completion of the poet's inner psychic structure which he describes in the dedication stanzas produced its inherent archetype, and from that centre emerged the vision of his maturity.

Viewed in this light, The Revolt of Islam is a genuine apocalyptic vision in which the poet "strips the veil of familiarity from the world, and lays bare the naked and sleeping beauty, which is the spirit of its forms." The "veil of familiarity" which he strips from the world is the habitual mode of perception in which evil is mistaken for good and good is rejected as evil. "The naked and sleeping beauty" which he lays bare is Lucifer, the Morning Star.

What Shelley has presented in the mythological framework of the first Canto and the last twenty-five stanzas of the twelfth Canto is the archetypal pattern, the eternal

form, of the narrative of Laon and Cythna, which takes up the rest of the poem. As a poet, concerned with the eternal and unchanging forms of Nature, Shelley tended to be impatient with purely narrative fiction. He was primarily concerned, as Mary Shelley aptly points out, with the "curious and metaphysical anatomy of human passion and perception."[30] At the same time he was eager to reach as wide a public as possible and to share with it his own beliefs and feelings. Mary Shelley, who believed that the poems "which sprang from the emotions of his own heart"[31] would reach a wider audience than those which were "purely imaginary",[32] attempted to persuade Shelley to interest himself in a "mere human"[33] story in order to engage the sympathy of the reading public. In writing The Revolt of Islam, he attempted to follow Mary's advice and, in his Preface, he is at some pains to point out that he is writing "a story of human passion. . . and appealing . . . to the common sympathies of every human breast." About the mythological framework, he has very little to say.

It was, of course, impossible for Shelley to limit himself to such a narrative. The human passion must be presented "in its most universal character",[34] and the appeal to the common sympathies must be presented "in contempt of all artificial opinions and institutions."[35] The

narrative, that is, must be of universal significance, and the appeal must be such as to render the author immortal. His high view of poetry was such that he could write in no other manner. "A poem", he says in his Defense of Poetry,

> is the image of life expressed in its eternal truth. There is this difference between a story and a poem, that a story is a catalogue of detached facts, which have no other connexion than time, place, circumstance, cause and effect; the other is the creation of actions according to the unchangeable forms of human nature, as existing in the mind of the Creator, which is itself the image of all other minds. The one is partial, and applies only to a definite period of time, and a certain combination of events which can never again recur; the other is universal, and contains within itself the germ of a relation to whatever motives or actions have place in the possible varieties of human nature. Time, which destroys the beauty and the use of a story of particular facts, stript of the poetry which should invest them, augments that of Poetry, and for ever develops new and wonderful applications of the eternal truth which it contains. Hence epitomes have been called the moths of just history; they eat out the poetry of it. A story of particular facts is as a mirror which obscures and distorts that which should be beautiful: Poetry is a mirror which makes beautiful that which is distorted.[36]

The narrative of Laon and Cythna, therefore, if presented without the universalizing power of myth, would, according to Shelley, have little or no lasting effect. Its presence is justified only insofar as the mythological framework within which it is set illuminates the significance of the events of the narrative. Laon and Cythna, that is, must be viewed not merely in their "mere human" relationship, but as they exist "in the mind of the Creator which is itself the image of all other minds." They must

be viewed in their archetypal form.

As a narrative, the poem fails because Shelley was determined, in order to reach a wider audience, to view his characters in an entirely human perspective. "The whole poem," he says in a letter to his prospective publisher (October 13, 1817),

> with the exception of the first canto and part of the last, is a mere human story without the smallest intermixture of supernatural interference. The first canto is indeed in some measure a distinct poem, though very necessary to the wholeness of the work. I say this because if it were written in the manner of the first canto, I could not expect that it would be very interesting to any great number of people. I have attempted in the progress of my work to speak to the common elementary emotions of the human heart.[37]

The very nature of Shelley's conception of the "beau ideal"[38] of the French Revolution, however, required of him that he write a very different kind of poem. By 1817, he had realized that any revolution to be successful must take place within the human mind; tyrants must be overthrown from within because their real lodging-place is within the human breast. The "beau ideal" of the French Revolution, therefore, is an internal drama. What was required in order to present it in poetic form, was the allegorical method in which the various characters symbolized conflicting states of mind. Professor Baker rightly concludes that "we have in the poem as it stands only the shreds and patches of what might have been a closely woven allegorical fabric."[39]

After The Revolt of Islam, Shelley never addressed himself "to any great number of people." The nature of his vision, he realized, made it impossible to gain such an audience. So far as he was concerned, The Revolt of Islam was a failure, not because it received an unfavorable response from the public, but because it was addressed to the public. In his Preface to Prometheus Unbound, he says:

> My purpose has hitherto been simply to familiarize the highly refined imagination of the more select classes of poetical readers with beautiful idealisms of moral excellence; aware that until the mind can love, and admire, and trust, and hope, and endure, reasoned principles of moral conduct are seeds cast upon the highway of life which the unconscious passenger tramples into dust, although they would bear the harvest of his happiness.[40]

These "select classes of poetical readers" were his "fit audience . . . though few".[41] And it was the audience that Shelley would have preferred to engage in The Revolt of Islam. As pointed out earlier in this chapter, he had Milton's epic in mind in the composition of the poem and it was the audience that recognized Milton's genius whom he really wished to address. Accepting the advice of false comforters, he attempted to reach the "unconscious passenger" whose mind was unprepared for a more truthful picture of his own mind.

The result is a poem that is, at best, a compromise. The poem, he knew, should have been "all written in the manner of the first canto." As it stands, "the first canto

is indeed in some measure a distinct poem"; the rest is "a mere human story without the smallest intermixture of supernatural interference." And to the extent that it is a "mere human story" its weakness can best be explained by imagining what Spenser's Fairy Queen would be like if its action were stripped of its allegorical significance.

Shelley, of course, was incapable of writing a crude melodrama. The action, while disjointed and sensational, is nevertheless embued with a high moral purpose. The spirit, if not the form, of the mythical drama of the first Canto is preserved throughout. Laon and Cythna act, throughout the narrative, in the constant presence of the Morning Star. And when they meet a martyr's death, they are magically transported to the Temple of the Spirit where they sit in the presence of Lucifer. The narrative ends where it began so that, in a sense, the whole tale is viewed sub specie aeternitatis. In the spiritual union of Laon and Cythna, Shelley pre-figures the ultimate union of mankind with the harmony of the cosmos, which will be reflected in the new society of the golden age. The central vision, then, remains intact. At the same time the spirit of good is a wounded serpent; the apocalyptic event within the poem is abortive.

For all its deficiencies, The Revolt of Islam shows a great improvement over Queen Mab. For one thing, he has

substituted, in the first Canto, myth for "methodical and systematic argument." For another, he has brought his vision of the universe ruled by "consentaneous love" into a more human perspective so that man, viewed in terms of the psyche-epipsyche relationship, becomes the centre of the drama. This development reveals a new foreground in Shelley's poetry. While it breaks down because of his narrative method, the poem nevertheless reveals an inner consistency that shows a single focus rooted in the poet's unified conception of himself as a Promethean poet dedicated to the renovation of the world through the proclamation of his vision of the redeeming power of love. It is, as it were, the vision of Queen Mab, translated into a human drama with the marring effects of D'Holbach's materialism removed.

Chapter 7

PROMETHEUS UNBOUND

In Queen Mab, many of the contradictions in the poem stem, as earlier pointed out, from the conflict within Shelley of two modes of mental action, the rational and the imaginative. In the summer of 1812, it will be remembered, Shelley had surrounded himself with a new set of friends, chief among whom were Newton and Peacock, and from them received his first serious introduction to classical literature. He had, of course, been introduced to classical literature at Eton and Oxford, but, because he considered the method of instruction tyrannical, he tended to reject it, preferring what he calls his "accidental education"[1] to the formal education of a public school and a university. As is evident in the previous two chapters, the kind of "accidental education" he received under the influence of Newton and Darwin was of a highly imaginative, rather than purely rational, kind. The two modes of mental action which conflict within Queen Mab, therefore,

show the influence of Godwin and D'Holbach on the one hand, and the influence of Newton and Darwin, on the other.

One way in which this conflict expresses itself in the poem is in Shelley's view of Necessity. The doctrine, which he originally received from Godwin and the philosophes, was simply a statement of the immutable law of cause and effect which governs both the material and the mental universe. In Newton this immutable law is conceived of in mythological terms; it is simply the four phases of the Hindu Zodiac viewed in terms of the whole cosmic cycle of creation, preservation, destruction and renovation. It is the full circle of the wheel of life viewed from without in terms of its total revolution. This is the sense in which, for example, Peacock uses the term in the opening stanza of his first version of Ahrimanes:

> Parent of being, mistress of the spheres,
> Supreme Necessity, o'er all doth reign.
> She guides the course of the revolving years,
> With power no prayers can change, nor force restrain:
> Binding all nature in her golden chain,
> Whose infinite connections links afar
> The smallest atom of the sandy plain,
> And the last ray of heaven's remotest star,
> That round the verge of space wheels its refulgent car.
>
> Her sovereign laws four rival gods fulfil:
> Each holds in turn her delegated sway:
> Unnumbered genii, creatures of her will,
> Gird their respective thrones in proud array,
> Speed at their beck, and their behests obey.

Viewed in the mythological terms of Newton's zodiac, it is possible to explain, in an imaginative, rather than

rational, way how men can be the passive instruments of Necessity, and yet, through love, act as a redeeming force changing evil into good, thereby ushering in a new golden age. Because they comprehend, through the vision granted to them by Necessity acting through the "genii", the entire cycle of Necessity, they are able to perceive the end in the beginning and thus act as messengers of hope, preparing men for the reign of the renovator. Thus, Peacock, in his prose outline of the first version of Ahrimanes, says:

> But some of the genii come forth from time to time to mingle with mankind, knowing that through their ministry must the reign of the restorer be brought on. Thus the world is never totally abandoned by the spirits of good. Few indeed are the favoured mortals that can know and feel their influence: but to them is given an impulse and a power of mind which arises triumphant over all the tyranny of Ahrimanes. They fix their eyes on the heights futurity promised to their posterity, and hold their steady course through the evils of life, like the iron bark of the enchanter through the waves of the storm, which remained one and indissoluble amid the wildest conflicts of wind and sea; which might be submerged by superior power but could neither be changed nor broken.[2]

Queen Mab, in Shelley's poem, is just such a genius. She appears to Ianthe in a vision and takes her to the height from which the past, present and future condition of the entire human race can be seen at a glance. But what she sees, Shelley attempts to explain in logical and methodical terms, ignoring the mythological frame of reference which alone is adequate to carry the movement of the poem. As a "votary of Reason" Shelley was not yet able to write

a poem whose organic unity was governed by an imaginative vision expressed through myth. Indeed, he goes so far as to suggest in his Notes that myth is simply the revelation of human ignorance, part of the tyranny of the past still exerting its influence over the present. The redemption of mankind can only come when men have a sufficient knowledge of science (i.e., the immutable laws of cause and effect in terms of which the motions of the material and mental universe are predictable) and learn, as a result, to abandon the kind of irrational mental action that gives rise to myth.

In The Revolt of Islam, this dichotomy of two modes of perception is, partially at least, overcome. In the first Canto, Shelley sets his poem within a mythological frame and, in terms of that frame, interprets the action of the epic. He was, however, whether from the persuasion of Mary or the desire to reach as wide an audience as possible, still unwilling to write an entirely mythopoeic poem in which the action is the outward revelation of psychic states of mind. He had yet to explore, on an epic scale, the "metaphysical anatomy"[3] of the human mind where, he believed, the real human drama takes place. The truth of what mankind perceives, he says in his Defense of Poetry, arises from within; it is the "internal adjustment"[4] to all those impressions that impose themselves from without.

Upon the character of that "internal adjustment" rests man's hope of moral renovation.

Prometheus Unbound is Shelley's finest apocalyptic poem not because of what he attempts to present in the poem (which is in no way radically different from Queen Mab and The Revolt of Islam) but because of the way in which he presents it. The key to an understanding of the inner structure of much of the poem lies in the nature of the imagery. Shelley discusses it in his Preface to the poem.

> The imagery which I have employed will be found, in many instances, to have been drawn from the operations of the human mind, or from those external actions by which they are expressed. This is unusual in modern poetry, although Dante and Shakespeare are full of instances of the same kind: Dante indeed more than any other poet, and with greater success. But the Greek poets, as writers to whom no resource of awakening the sympathy of their contemporaries was unknown, were in the habitual use of this power; and it is the study of their works (since a higher merit would probably be denied me,) to which I am willing that my readers should impute this singularity.[5]

What Shelley here says about the imagery "drawn from the operations of the human mind" is enlarged upon by Mary in her Note on Prometheus Unbound. "More popular poets", she says,

> clothe the ideal with familiar and sensible imagery. Shelley loved to idealize the real- to gift the mechanism of the material universe with a soul and a voice, and to bestow such also on the most delicate and abstract emotions and thoughts of the mind. Sophocles was his great master in this species of imagery.
>
> I find in one of his manuscript books some remarks on a line in the Oedipus Tyrannus, which shows [sic] at once

the critical subtlety of Shelley's mind, and explains his apprehension of those 'minute and remote distinctions of feeling, whether relative to external nature or the living beings which surround us,' which he pronounces, in the letter quoted in the note to The Revolt of Islam, to comprehend all that is sublime in man.

"In the Greek Shakespeare, Sophocles, we find the image,

Πολλὰς δ' ὁδοὺς ἐλθοῦντα φροντίδος πλάνους.

A line of almost unfathomable depth of poetry; yet how simple are the images in which it is arrayed;

Coming to many ways in the wanderings of careful thought.

If the words ὁδοὺς and πλάνους had not been used, the line might have been explained in a metaphorical, instead of an absolute sense, as we say 'ways and means,' and 'wandering', for error and confusion; but they meant literally paths or roads, such as we tread with our feet; and wanderings, such as a man makes when he loses himself in desert, or roams from city to city, as Oedipus, the speaker of this verse, was destined to wander, blind and asking charity. What a picture does this line suggest of the mind as a wilderness of intricate paths, wide as the universe, which here made its symbol, a world within a world, which he, who seeks some knowledge with respect to what he ought to do, searches throughout, as he would search the external universe for some valued thing which was hidden from him upon its surface."[6]

Underlying Shelley's view of imagery is the notion of the microcosm and the macrocosm; the mind is "a world within a world". The nature of poetry lies in the revelation of this "world within a world" through the creation of an image of it which is the poem itself. What is projected, however, is not simply a faithful copy of the outer world. Shelley, in his Preface to <u>The Revolt of Islam</u>, rejects that species of literary criticism which would curb the poet's imagination by insisting that poetry should

simply be a mirror of what exists in the sense of being habitually perceived. What is projected from the mind, therefore, is the universe of impressions transmuted by mind and endowed with that life which properly belongs to the inner nature of man, i.e., to man's creative faculty, the imagination. Poetry, in this sense, is the antitype of the prototype within man.

Since all poetry exists within a verbal universe, it follows that language itself is the creation of the imagination. In its original and purest form language itself is metaphor; i.e., it is expressive of the real identity between the microcosm and the macrocosm. This is precisely the view of language which Shelley presents in his Defense of Poetry. "But poetry in a more restricted sense", he says,

> expresses those arrangements of language, and especially metrical language, which are created by that imperial faculty, whose throne is curtained within the invisible nature of man. And this springs from the nature itself of language, which is a more direct representation of the actions and passions of our internal being, and is susceptible of more various and delicate combinations, than colour, form, or motion, and is more plastic and obedient to the control of that faculty of which it is the creation. For language is arbitrarily produced by the imagination, and has relation to thoughts alone; but all other materials, instruments, and conditions of art, have relations among each other, which limit and interpose between conception and expression. The former is as a mirror which reflects, the latter as a cloud which enfeebles, the light of which both are mediums of communication.[7]

Shelley, as the letter with reference to the poem reveals, believed that The Revolt of Islam was "a genuine

picture of my own mind."[8] The account of the growth of his own mind, he presents in his examination of his "accidental education" in the Preface and in the dedication stanzas. This account parallels the account of the education of Laon in the poem itself. Born in Argolis, Laon was nurtured "beside the echoing sea" (II, 10) and felt within his "mortal frame" (II, 11) all the impulses of "this vital world"(II, 146). In addition to his intercourse with the material world, he communed with "those deathless minds, which leave where they have past / A path of light" (II, 172-173). From this "glorious intercourse" (II, 174), he drew "as from a mine of magic store" (II, 175) words which "sprang forth" from his "fancy's wings" (II, 178). With the "adamantine armour of their power" (II, 177), he set forth to conquer, through his poetry, the hearts of men grown weary with the heavy burden of tyranny that had usurped the natural order of things:

> These hopes found words thro' which my spirit sought
> To weave a bondage of such sympathy,
> As might create some response to the thought
> Which ruled me now - and as the vapours lie
> Bright in the outspread morning's radiancy,
> So were these thoughts invested with the light
> Of language; and all bosoms made reply
> On which its lustre streamed, whene'er it might
> Through darkness wide and deep those tranced spirits smite.
> (II, 136-144)

This discharge of psychic lightning, however, would not have been possible without Cythna, his "second self" (II, 209) who clothed his world in "undissolving radiancy"(II,

210) and, through her love, "kindled intenser zeal" (II, 281) within his breast:

> Within that fairest form, the female mind
> Untainted by the poison clouds which rest
> On the dark world, a sacred home did find:
> But else, from the wide earth's maternal breast,
> Victorious Evil, which had dispossessed
> All native power, had those fair children torn,
> And made them slaves to sooth his vile unrest,
> And minister to lust its joys forlorn,
> Til they had learned to breathe the atmosphere of scorn.
> (II, 307-315.)

In this portrait of Laon, Shelley created his own image so that he emerges as the antitype of himself. Yet, in the poem, Laon is a shadowy figure, a kind of reflection of Cythna whose character and action dominate the narrative. This failure to create and sustain an adequate image of the hero of the poem suggests that Shelley, in 1817, had not yet mastered his own inner powers, was unable adequately to project his own prototype into the creation of its antitype, the poem itself. Perhaps in this power lies the superiority of Prometheus Unbound over The Revolt of Islam. Prometheus is the realized image (antitype) of Shelley's ideal self, and as such he dominates the poem.

Viewed in the light of Shelley's conception of poetry, the real action of Prometheus Unbound takes place within the mind: Prometheus is not, like Laon, an image of "individual mind aspiring after excellence"; he is the human mind itself caught in the apocalyptic moment of creation. He is a revelation of the poetic faculty,

the divinity within man, at work recreating the universe from within.

The mind of man, revealed in the fulness of its creative power, is the archetypal image of the revolutionary poet-prophet which he describes in A Defense of Poetry. The unfolding drama within the mind of Prometheus, presented in a succession of pictures, can, therefore, be best described in terms of Shelley's account of the creative process in that essay. Before examining Shelley's lyric drama from this point of view, however, it is necessary to outline the action of the poem, and examine its mythological significance.

Prometheus, who brought man out of the primitive Saturnian Age by bestowing upon him the arts of civilized life, has been bound by Jupiter to a precipice in the Indian Caucasus for three thousand years because he refused to divulge to Jupiter the nature of the event that would put an end to his reign. During this long ordeal, Prometheus has continued to curse Jupiter. But the time has now arrived when he would recall his curse for, within himself, hate has turned to pity and forgiveness. Having succeeded in blotting out the memory of that curse, he asks the mountains, the whirlwinds, the air and the springs to tell him what it was. Although their beings still reverberate with the echoes of that original outburst against

Jupiter, they tremble at the thought of uttering it lest they themselves become the eternal embodiment of it. Finally the earth explains to Prometheus that there are two worlds - one of the living, the other of the dead. In the world of the dead exist the shades of all things that live and when they die they are united with their shades. Since the curse uttered by Prometheus is Jupiter's eternal form with which he must ultimately be united, the shade of Jupiter should be called up to utter it. The phantom appears and repeats the curse. When Prometheus hears it, he repents and the hour of his release has arrived.

In the meantime, Jupiter has sent Mercury to attempt once again to persuade Prometheus to reveal the secret that must sign his doom. Prometheus again refuses and further tortures are heaped upon him. Among others he is presented with a vision of the crucified Christ in order to show him what happens to those who attempt to defy God and work for the good of mankind. Not satisfied with this, the furies then show him the corruption that followed the death of Christ in order to persuade him that benevolent works are really of no avail. When Prometheus responds to these tortures by pitying the furies, they vanish.

Now enter four spirits who come to comfort Prometheus. One comes from the soul of love bearing a prophecy of freedom and hope which begins and ends in Prometheus. Another

comes from the soul of a sailor who, when his ship was destroyed in the midst of battle and he was floating upon the waters supported by a plank, gave his plank to his enemy and drowned. A third comes from the inspired dream of a sage, and the fourth from a poet's vision of love. Two more spirits approach, love and her sister despair, who have wandered over a world of ruin until they caught sight of Prometheus's smile which evoked a remembered happiness. In the presence of these spirits of love, Prometheus's mind turns to Asia, from whom, as a result of his imprisonment, he has been separated. The first act concludes with Panthea telling Prometheus that Asia waits for him in the far Indian vale, which once was desolate and frozen but now is invested with new life.

In the second act, the scene shifts to the Indian vale where Asia waits in exile to be re-united with Prometheus. Panthea enters rather weak from a dream which she had while sleeping in the arms of her sister, Ione, at the feet of Prometheus. The dream is prophetic of the re-union of Asia and Prometheus. A second dream she cannot remember; Asia asks her to raise her eyes so that she can read it there. Therein she sees first Prometheus and then a rough figure in a gray robe whom she does not recognize. The dream then speaks and tells her to follow. The word recalls the second dream: a lightning-blasted

almond-tree whose buds have burst is laid waste by a sudden wind that filled the earth with frost. On each blasted leaf was stamped "O Follow, Follow" (II, i, 141). Asia then says that she had a similar dream, and now the echoes take up the refrain of "follow, follow". In obedience, Asia and Panthea move into a thick forest hidden from sunlight and moonlight where nightingales sing at noon and Silenus chants his lovely songs prophetic of the release of the Titan and the restoration of the golden age.

Finally they make their way to a pinnacle of rock high in the mountains which proves to be the dwelling place of Demogorgon. From this high pinnacle they look down upon the earth and see it in the fulness of its glory. They enter a cave, the portal of which is like the chasm of a volcano. At the bottom of this chasm they are confronted by a shapeless power whose presence is felt rather than seen: it is Demogorgon.

Asia asks Demogorgon a variety of questions, the most important of which being, "Who reigns " (II, iv, 32) ? Demogorgon answers: "He reigns." Dissatisfied with the answer, Asia attempts to work it out for herself. The first age was one of Light and Love when there was only heaven and earth. The second age was that of Saturn in which time was not, the earth was paradise and man lived in a blissful state of ignorance. The third age was the

age of the fallen Prometheus who, though he gave wisdom to man, enthroned Jupiter so that man, in spite of wisdom, became a slave. Yet, through wisdom and the arts of civilized life, Prometheus, in spite of Jupiter, continued to work for man. Who then, Asia asks, is the master and who the slave? Demogorgon answers that Jupiter is the slave and yet he reigns. Who then, Asia asks, is the master of Jupiter? And Demogorgon answers, "the deep truth is imageless"(II, iv, 116).

Asia now asks Demogorgon when Prometheus shall be released. In answer the immortal Hours come rushing by, one of which waits to take Asia to Prometheus, another to take Demogorgon to Jupiter. Both of them ascend their cars and the destined hour has arrived. The countenance of Asia undergoes a change so that she is illumined with an unearthly light. The voices of the air, in rapture, burst forth in songs of praise to her, and Asia feels her soul moving toward its union with Prometheus. She says that she has arrived at the consummation of the ages of infancy, youth, maturity and old age, and entered beyond death and birth into a diviner day.

The third act shifts to Jupiter who has now consummated his marriage with Thetis and conceived a child in her womb,who, at the bidding of Demogorgon, will perpetuate his rule. In the midst of his rejoicing over this event,

Demogorgon arrives in the Car of the Hour. He says that he is Jupiter's child and commands him to follow him into the abyss. The tyranny of heaven is no more. There follows a scene in which Apollo tells the Ocean of the fall of Jupiter and the Ocean rejoices that harmony has been restored to the universe.

The scene now shifts to Prometheus, who, with the arrival of Asia, is unbound by Hercules and reunited with Asia. Together, Prometheus tells her, they will retire to an idyllic Paradise where they shall live forever in the embrace of the Beauty which gives birth to an immortal progeny, all the arts yet known and others, as yet unimagined. He then assigns last duties to those who surround him. Ione must give to the Spirit of the Hour the curved shell which Proteus made Asia's nuptial boon. The Spirit itself must loose the mighty music of that shell over the entire earth so that all men may hear it. Finally the earth presents to Prometheus and Asia a cave, which was the place where earth lamented the binding of Prometheus. So intense was the spirit of earth's grief that all who inhaled it were driven mad and were lured to battle. Now purified as a result of the unbinding of Prometheus, it shall be their abode forever. A spirit in the likeness of a winged child shall act as earth's torch-bearer and lead them beyond the peak of Bacchic Nysa to where it lies.

The last scene of the third act takes place in a forest with the enchanted cave in the background. Ione feels the presence of the Spirit of the Earth which guides the earth through heaven. Panthea explains that this spirit loved Asia before Jupiter ruled and came, in child-like manner, to feed upon the light of her eyes in every leisure hour. To Asia the spirit confided everything it had seen and felt, though its reasoning power was limited. In the midst of this explanation the Spirit of the Earth comes running to Asia and begs her never to leave again. Asia promises that they shall never be separated, that they shall always talk together. The Spirit replies that she has grown wiser through all the pain that she has endured in the past. Her time of suffering, however, is now over, for the earth is again full of joy and beautiful forms.

Finally, the Spirit of the Hour enters and Prometheus asks him to tell what he has heard and seen. He describes the transformation of the world. The loathsome mask of evil has fallen from the earth and society. Men are united as brothers, women are free, kings and priests are no more. The only limitation is that man is not free

> From chance, and death, and mutability,
> The clogs of that which else might oversoar
> The loftiest star of unascended heaven,
> Pinnacled dim in the intense inane.
> (III, iv, 201-204.)

In the final act all the Hours of the past melt away before the light of the new day. The Spirit of the visions

of sleep come forth. A chorus of Spirits from the abyss of wonder, from the recesses of lovers, from the unsealed springs of science and poetry, break into song and dance which develops into a frenzied Saturnalia. There follows a love-duet between the female moon and the masculine earth: the re-birth of love in the earth has quickened a response in the bosom of the moon so that she is rendered fruitful. Her revolutions about the earth are described in terms of an "insatiate bride" (IV, 471) cirding her lover in a frenzy of joy and passion. Finally, Demogorgon invokes the spirits of men, both living and dead, and all that the universe contains to listen to his final proclamation concerning the arrival of the momentous Hour:

> Love, from its awful throne of patient power
> In the wise heart, from the last giddy hour
> Of dread endurance, from the slippery, steep,
> And narrow verge of crag-like agony, springs
> And folds over the world its healing wings.
> (IV, 557-561.)

Within this extraordinary labyrinth, second only to Blake's great prophetic works in complexity, exists a fairly coherent mythological pattern which relates the poem to <u>The Revolt of Islam</u> and shows the continuing influence of Newton and Peacock, now further modified by Shelley's insight into Plato as a mythopoeic poet and his re-interpretation of the Hebrew-Christian myth. The analysis of this mythological pattern, therefore, provides a logical starting place for an understanding of Shelley's apocalyptic

vision. Having grasped the nature of that pattern, it is possible to relate it to Shelley's account of the creative process in A Defense of Poetry, thus establishing the real location of the drama within the mind of Prometheus, where the apocalypse properly takes place.

In Prometheus Unbound, Shelley's apocalyptic vision was finally realized in the fulness of its splendour. An attempt, therefore, will be made in what follows to gather together the various threads of the argument of this study insofar as they illuminate the nature of Shelley's poetic vision. The Orphic myth of Dionysus to which he was first introduced in Newton's Zodiacal theology provides the mythical framework. The view of the creative imagination presented in A Defense of Poetry provides the explanation of the apocalyptic process at work within the poem. The limitations imposed upon the vision of Prometheus by Demogorgon at the end of the poem provides an insight into that final dimension of Shelley's thought which he was to explore in Adonais and The Triumph of Life.

Prometheus is Shelley's realized image of the Dionysian hero. In the Orphic myth, Dionysus is the divinity within man, which, in a state of hieromania, is released from the prison of flesh so that man reassumes his original divine form. The power in man by which this transfiguration is achieved is the creative imagination. "It trans-

mutes all that it touches," says Shelley. "It strips the veil of familiarity from the world, and lays bare the naked and sleeping beauty, which is the spirit of its forms."[9] The apocalyptic vision, therefore, is man's vision of his own divinity in which the universe is revealed as the antitype of the prototype within himself. "It creates anew the universe, after it has been annihilated in our minds by the recurrence of impressions blunted by reiteration."[10] This fusion of man with the cosmos is the mode of perception which is characteristic of all mythical thought; it is the state of participation mystique.

The cosmological myth in Promotheus Unbound, involving creation, preservation, destruction and renovation, follows the Orphic pattern of Newton's Hindu zodiac. The first phase is the creation of Heaven and Earth and the dawn of "primogenial Love." "There was ", says Asia, standing before Demogorgon, "the Heaven and Earth at first,/ And Light and Love" (II, iv, 32-33). The mythological account of this first creation in Newton's Hindu Zodiac is the Taurine Bacchus, or the Ethereal Fire impregnating in Gemini, the Crab or Chaos and producing Nature. In the Orphic myth of Dionysus, references to which are scattered throughout Prometheus Unbound, the creation of "primogenial Love" or Eros, the Dionysus-Phanes, is described in terms

of Chronos fashioning an egg in Aither or Chaos which then splits in two and "a figure of shining light"[11] springs forth. This figure is Eros, the first-born Dionysus. The birth of Eros in the Iliad (which Shelley had read) is described in terms of Venus arising out of the primordial chaos of the ocean. Aphrodite, who is the earthly Venus or Nature, means "the foam-risen "; aphros being the Greek word for foam. In Prometheus Unbound, Shelley identifies Asia with Venus. Thus the birth of Venus described in terms of her rising from the shell which Proteus made for her becomes, in the poem, "that curved shell, which Proteus old,/ Made Asia's nuptial boon"(III,iii, 65-66). The analogy between Venus rising from her shell and Dionysus-Phanes rising from the split egg is obvious. Asia, then, is love both earthly and divine. As earthly love she is Nature; as divine love, she is, as Prometheus describes her, the "light of life,/ Shadow of beauty unbeheld"(III, iii, 7-8). The voices of the Air address her in the same way; she is the "Life of Life" (II, v, 47) and the "Child of Light" (II, v, 54).
The first order of creation then finds its centre in Asia who, in her original union with Prometheus (from whom she has been separated during the reign of Jupiter), symbolizes the original reign of love which, as the poem opens, is about to be restored. To announce the glad tidings of the

re-birth of Asia (her re-union with Prometheus), therefore, Prometheus asks the Spirit of the Hour to take the shell which Proteus created for Venus and discharge over the surface of the earth the message - Proteus breathed into it "a voice to be accomplished" (III, iii, 67)-of its mighty music. The second phase, Asia describes as the reign of Saturn in which man lived in a state of idyllic, vegetative bliss comparable to the Biblical Eden or Blake's Beulah. The reign of Saturn was the age of preservation in which "earth's primal spirits beneath his sway" existed

> As the calm joy of flowers and living leaves
> Before the wind or sun has withered them
> And semivital worms.
> (II, iv, 36-38.)

It was an age, that is, when men were still denied

> The birthright of their being, knowledge, power,
> The skill which wields the elements, the thought
> Which pierces this dim universe like light,
> Self-empire, and the majesty of love.
> (II, iv, 39-42.)

The third age, the introduction of evil into the world comparable to the temptation of Eve by the serpent in Genesis and the devouring of Dionysus-Zagreus in the Orphic myth, was inaugurated by Prometheus. Prometheus gave Jupiter his throne on the condition that man be free, so that the price of freedom, ironically, was the introduction of evil into the world. The conflict which ensued between good and evil, a conflict necessary to the expression of human freedom, was the defining characteristic of this third

age. And, as in the Newtonian zodiacal philosophy, though evil is everywhere in control, hope, the inheritance of an earlier happier age, never altogether abandons the human breast. Prometheus, though bound to an icy precipice, remains a symbol of hope, an augury of restored oneness.

> Prometheus saw, and waked the legioned hopes
> Which sleep within folded Elysian flowers,
> Nepenthe, Moly, Amaranth, fadeless blooms,
> That they might hide with thin and rainbow wings
> The shape of Death; and Love he sent to bind
> The disunited tendrils of that vine
> Which bears the wine of life, the human heart;
> And he tamed fire which like some beast of prey,
> Most terrible, but lovely, played beneath
> The frown of man; and tortured to his will
> Iron and gold, the slaves and signs of power,
> And gems and poisons, and all subtlest forms
> Hidden beneath the mountains and the waves.
> He gave man speech, and speech created thought,
> Which is the measure of the universe;
> And Science struck the thrones of earth and heaven,
> Which shook, but fell not; and the harmonious mind
> Poured itself forth in all-prophetic song;
> And music lifted up the listening spirit
> Until it walked, exempt from mortal care,
> Godlike, o'er the clear billows of sweet sound;
> . . . . . .
> Such, the alleviations of his state,
> Prometheus gave to man, for which he hangs
> Withering in destined pain.
> (II, iv, 59-100.)

In the Orphic myth, this third phase is presented in the devouring of Dionysus by the Titans and the emergence of fallen man, who carries the divine spark of the god within his soul and yearns to re-assume his own divinity. Plato, in making use of the Orphic myth in the <u>Phaedrus</u> associates the first two phases with "pre-existence" in which man lived in the presence of the Forms. The third

phase is the descent of the soul into the prison of flesh from which it yearns to escape and return to the world of the Forms. The period of its imprisonment (for the virtuous man) is three thousand years, which is, of course, in Shelley's Prometheus Unbound, the three thousand years in which Prometheus has been bound to the precipice by Jupiter.

Viewed in the light of the Christian myth of the fall of man, it becomes evident what Shelley means when he says that "the only imaginary being resembling in any degree Prometheus, is Satan".[12] In Shelley's myth, Prometheus does bring about the fall of man by persuading him, as Satan persuades Eve, to eat of the Tree ofGood and Evil. This mythical event, however, is given a very different significance by Shelley. While the immediate consequences are the entrance of "Death into the World, and all our woe,"[13] its ultimate consequence is the restoration of the divinity in man, not in the form of innocence, but in the form of redemptive wisdom. Milton's vision of Satan's rôle, Shelley believed, was arrested; he was unable, because of the conditions of the age in which he wrote, to carry through his vision to its apocalyptic finale. Shelley, living, as he thought, in a more enlightened age (at least as far as the thinking portion of mankind was concerned), was, therefore, in a position to lift the "mask

and mantle in which these great poets [Dante and Milton] walk through eternity enveloped and disguised"[14] and reveal the true Promethean form of Milton's Satan.

The fourth and last phase, which in the Orphic myth is the re-assumption of man's divine form, is the action of the drama proper. As Shelley presents it, it is the arrival of the apocalyptic hour in which Prometheus and Asia are re-united and the earth is revealed in the form of heaven. In The Hymn to Intellectual Beauty, Shelley speaks of the "awful shadow of some unseen Power" which "floats though unseen among us" and visits "this various world with an inconstant wing". In Prometheus Unbound this "awful shadow" is Asia and the inconstancy of her visits to this "various world" is described in the conversation, at the end of the third act, between Asia and the Spirit of the Earth. Before the reign of Jupiter, Panthea says, the Spirit of the Earth loved Asia. Since that reign, however, the Spirit has been separated from Asia primarily through grief. Now, however, that Asia and Prometheus have been re-united, Asia promises the Spirit that she shall never again be separated from her.

The mythological pattern of the whole poem, therefore, may be described as the union, separation and re-union of Prometheus and Asia. What Shelley has done is to re-express, within a pagan tradition, the Biblical archetypal pattern

of creation, fall, redemption and apocalypse so that Milton's Satan (Shelley's Prometheus) emerges as the real protagonist of the mythical drama. It now remains to examine this mythical drama as a kind of "objective correlative" of the creative process at work within the imagination of the poet.

Shelley's view of the creative imagination has already been explored in the first chapter. The imagination, he says, is a shaping power at work within man whereby the vast multitude of impressions which invade his consciousness are shaped into an ideal pattern that is the projected image of his own prototype. This ideal pattern can be expressed in any number of art forms, including not only the verbal and plastic arts, but civil constitutions or systems of law as well. What all forms of art share in common is the totality of their vision expressive of the eternal forms of human nature. The actual embodiment of these eternal forms in a work of art, however, is usually veiled in the temporary circumstances of the age in which the artist lives. Milton and Dante, for example, present their visions, Shelley says, within the outer covering of certain distorted notions concerning the nature of the invisible world which belong, not to the poets proper, but to their age. The greatness of a poet, therefore, can be measured, to some extent, by the degree to which he is able to divest himself

of that outer covering and present his vision in its naked purity. This ideal, however, Shelley recognizes, can never be totally realized in any work of art. For one thing, he says, it is necessary "to temper this planetary music for mortal ears."[15]

Since all art shares, to some degree at least, this limitation of the poetic faculty, it is necessary for each age to recreate in art those eternal forms which make up that single cyclic poem that includes all poetry. Should new poets fail to arise to perpetuate this process of re-creation, then art loses its visionary, redemptive power and becomes simply the basis of a dogmatic formulation of a moral and legalistic code. Milton's Paradise Lost, for example, has become, he says, "a chief popular support"[16] of the Christian system simply because in the succeeding century no new poets arose to recreate its inner vision. That inner vision, he goes on, "contains within itself a philosophical refutation of that system, of which, by a strange and natural antithesis, it has been a chief popular support."[17]

This inner vision, which is the real expression of the creative faculty in man, has little or nothing to do with the poet's own realm of consciousness. It is, he says, "the interpretation of a diviner nature through our own" which "redeems from decay the visitations of the divinity in

man." And he quotes Milton to support his view: the Muse "dictated" to him the "unpremeditated song."[18] In fact, says Shelley, the conscious portion of the human mind is, in some sense, the enemy of poetry, for it restricts, by imposing artificial fetters, that which must essentially be "unpremeditated." Whatever belongs to human consciousness belongs to the familiar and habitual world; whatever belongs to poetry as poetry annihilates the familiar and habitual world by recreating and re-shaping the materials that make it up. Viewed in the perspective of the poetic vision, the familiar world is the realm of chaos, the void which the poet, like God, calls into being.

"Poetry", says Shelley in his Defense, "is connate with the origin of man."[19] What he means by this statement is that man's initial response to the universe of impressions that invade his consciousness from without is itself poetry because that response is "an internal adjustment of the sounds or motions thus excited to the impressions which produced them."[20] The hypothetical first man, whom he describes in The Revolt of Islam as standing alone "on the verge of chaos" (I, 227), is the archetypal image of the child or the savage ("for the savage is to ages what the child is to years"[21]). By examining the characteristic activity of either the child or the savage, therefore, it is possible, Shelley believed, to demonstrate his conviction that "poetry

is connate with the origin of man." Thus, he says:

> A child at play by itself will express its delight by its voice and motions; and every inflexion of tone and every gesture will bear exact relation to a corresponding antitype in the pleasurable impressions which awakened it; it will be the reflected image of that impression; and as the lyre trembles and sounds after the wind has died away, so the child seeks, by prolonging in its voice and motions the duration of the effect, to prolong also a consciousness of the cause. . . . The savage (for the savage is to ages what the child is to years) expresses the emotions produced in him by surrounding objects in a similar manner; and language and gesture, together with plastic or pictorial imitation become the image of the combined effect of those objects, and of his comprehension of them.[22]

This conception of the imagination creating a "reflected image" of the impressions received from without assumes that there is an external world as such and that that external world is "the corresponding antitype" of the inner nature of man. Man, however, only becomes aware of its existence through his imaginative response to it. What is thereby produced is a harmony that reveals the oneness of man and nature. This is the harmony of which Wordsworth speaks, and it lies at the basis of all mythological thought.

In Prometheus Unbound, the external world, viewed as a source from which all impressions are received, is Demogorgon. Since it is impossible to conceive of the external world as it is, separate and apart from man, Shelley deliberately avoids attempting to describe him through the creation of an image. When Panthea and Asia enter his cave, Panthea aska: "What veiled form sits on that ebon throne" (II, iv,1)? Asia replies: "The veil has fallen." And

Panthea goes on to describe what cannot be described; she simply feels what she cannot see.

> I see a mighty darkness
> Filling the seat of power, and rays of gloom
> Dart round, as light from the meridian sun.
> - Ungazed upon and shapeless; neither limb
> Nor form, nor outline; yet we feel it is
> A living Spirit.
> (II, iv, 2-7.)

Demogorgon in himself is Necessity, the immutable order of the universe in terms of which the destiny of every living thing is determined. For this reason Asia asks him all the ultimate questions: who made the world and all that it contains, including evil? And when he answers that God did, she goes on to ask, "Whom calledst thou God " (II, iv, 112)? He answers that "Jove is the supreme of living things" (II, iv, 113). But Demogorgon has already tacitly agreed that Jove is evil and therefore a slave. Hence, Asia asks: "Who is the master of the slave" (II, iv, 114)? Whereupon Demogorgon replies:

> If the abysm
> Could vomit forth its secrets. But a voice
> Is wanting, the deep truth is imageless.
> (II, iv, 115-116.)

The presence of Demogorgon in <u>Prometheus Unbound</u> establishes the distinction, found in Plato's discussion of myth and examined in the second chapter, between the object of truth and truth about the object. The object itself cannot be verbalized; the most that the poet can achieve through his myth is a "likely account".[23] The apocalyptic

vision inherent in all cosmological myths, therefore, is the analogia visionis of the real apocalypse. In poetry, man catches a glimpse of his own divinity, but its actual realization - his union with his own divine image - must wait upon death. And this realm of death is the abode of Demogorgon to which Panthea and Asia descend in preparation for Asia's reunion with Prometheus.

> For know there are two worlds of life and death:
> One that which thou beholdest; but the other
> Is underneath the grave, where do inhabit
> The shadows of all forms that think and live
> Till death unite them and they part no more;
> Dreams and the light imaginings of men,
> And all that faith creates or love desires,
> Terrible, strange, sublime and beauteous shapes
> . . . . . .
> . . . all the gods
> Are there, and all the powers of nameless worlds,
> Vast, sceptred phantoms; heroes, men, and beasts;
> And Demogorgon, a tremendous gloom.
> (I, 195-207.)

The question that Asia really wants Demogorgon to answer concerns the ultimate ruling power of the universe. And Demogorgon, though "the deep truth is imageless", nevertheless does provide her with the answer for which she is searching, an answer which, in her heart, she already knew. Here is Demogorgon's answer:

> For what would it avail to bid thee gaze
> On the revolving world? What to bid speak
> Fate, Time, Occasion, Chance, and Change? To these
> All things are subject but eternal Love.
> (II, iv, 117-120.)

And Asia replies:

> So much I asked before, and my heart gave

> The response thou hast given; and of such truths
> Each of itself must be the oracle.
> (II, iv, 121-123.)

"The great secret of morals", says Shelley in his Defense, "is love; or a going out of our nature, and an identification of ourselves with the beautiful which exists in thought, action, or person, not our own."[24] In this sense, love is identical with the imagination for "a man, to be greatly good, must imagine intensely and comprehensively; he must put himself in the place of another and of many others; the pains and pleasures of his species must become his own."[25] In the figure of Prometheus, Shelley has created an archetype that embraces "the pains and pleasures of his species." As such, Prometheus, the creation of the poet's imagination, is Shelley's own imaginative form, and what he presents in the unbinding of Prometheus is the release of his own creative faculty, which is, at the same time, the creative faculty in all men.

The poem opens with Prometheus bound to a precipice. This precipice is the image of the familiar world from which the imagination must lift the "dark veil"; it is the world of pain that all men share in common when it is perceived unimaginatively. "All things", says Shelley in his Defense,

> exist as they are perceived; at least in relation to the percipient. 'The mind is its own place, and of itself can make a Heaven of Hell, a Hell of Heaven.' But poetry defeats the curse which binds us to be subjected to the accident of surrounding impressions. . . . It makes us the inhabitants of a world to which the familiar world is a chaos,

It reproduces the common Universe of which we are portions and percipients, and it purges from our inward sight the film of familiarity which obscures from us the wonder of our being.[26]

The unbinding of Prometheus, therefore, is the "purging from our inward sight the film of familiarity which obscures from us the wonder of our being." Demogorgon in the closing stanzas of the drama describes this inward release as Love springing "from the slippery, steep,/ And narrow verge of crag-like agony" and folding "over the world its healing wings" (IV, iv, 559-561).

To this precipice Prometheus has been bound by Jupiter, who emerges as a symbol of tyranny and superstition in contrast to the knowledge and science which is the gift of Prometheus. The conflict between Prometheus and Jupiter, therefore, is the conflict between ignorance and enlightenment which Shelley discusses in the Notes to Queen Mab. The word God, says Shelley in his Notes, was, in all probability, "only an expression denoting the unknown cause of the known events which men perceived in the universe."[27] Viewed simply as an expression of the unknown which invests the known world, the invention of God has a certain imaginative justification, for it is characteristic of man's desire to reduce multiplicity to unity. When, however, a metaphor is assumed to be a real object and a word mistaken for a thing, the word God becomes an object of worship.

By the vulgar mistake of a metaphor for a real being, of a word for a thing, it became a man, endowed with human

qualities and governing the universe as an earthly monarch governs his kingdom. Their addresses to this imaginary being, indeed, are much in the same style as those of subjects to a king. They acknowledge his benevolence, deprecate his anger, and supplicate his favour.[28]

In A Defense of Poetry, Shelley returns to this problem, presenting it, however, with a somewhat different emphasis. Speaking of poets "in the infancy of art", he says:

Their language is vitally metaphorical; that is, it marks the before unapprehended relations of things and perpetuates their apprehension, until the words which represent them, become, through time, signs for portions or classes of thoughts instead of pictures of integral thoughts; and then if no new poets should arise to create afresh the associations which have been thus disorganized, language will be be dead to all the nobler purposes of human intercourse.[29]

What Shelley is here discussing is the problem of the arrested vision, the failure of succeeding poets to recreate the imaginative forms of the poetic vision so that the "before unapprehended relations of things" which the primitive imagination fuses into an imaginative synthesis becomes fixed. Jupiter is just such a fixation which, through time, has loosed itself from its source in man's creative faculty and taken on a separate identity of its own. To bring back the "metaphor" to its source within the inner nature of man and then recreate it from that source is the function of the poet. This power to "create afresh the associations which have been thus disorganized" Shelley believed was evident in Christ's recreation of the arrested vision of the Old Testament, and in Milton's presentation of Satan in Paradise

Lost. In presenting the conflict between Prometheus and Jupiter in Prometheus Unbound, therefore, Shelley has in mind both the New Testament figure of Christ and Milton's Satan as he himself interpreted them.

Insofar as Prometheus is the archetypal image of man viewed in the light of his creative faculty, Jupiter is, in origin, the creation of Prometheus. Thus, in Shelley's rendering of the Aeschylean myth, it is Prometheus who gives Jupiter his power and places him upon his throne. In giving him this power, however, his vision has been arrested. This act on the part of Prometheus is, therefore, the "objective correlative" of Prometheus's own inner condition, a condition that binds him to "the slippery, steep,/ And narrow verge of crag-like agony", Jupiter is Prometheus's failure to recreate.

The battle between Prometheus and Jupiter, therefore, is internal. Viewed dramatically and from without, Jupiter has bound Prometheus to the precipice; viewed from within, Prometheus is bound by his own curse, which, although he can no longer remember what it was, still holds him in its thrall. That curse is itself the eternal form of Jupiter and, therefore, it is the shadow of Jupiter who comes back from the realm of death, where his eternal form resides, to utter it. When Prometheus hears it, he says:

> It doth repent me: words are quick and vain;
> Grief for awhile is blind, and so was mine.

I wish no living thing to suffer pain.
(I, 303-305.)

This utterance is the first stage in the unbinding of Prometheus. His grief had blinded him, turning love into hate. Now he repents, hate gives way to pity, and the redemptive power of love is renewed within him.

Shelley, as already pointed out, tended to equate love with man's creative faculty. While writing Prometheus Unbound, Mary Shelley says,[30] he also translated, during an interval in the composition of the drama, Plato's Symposium, in which Eros is presented as a demon which guides man, in the realm of Becoming, toward the realm of pure Being. This demonic power is felt within man recreating the real world into a vision of the ideal; in this sense Eros is the shaping spirit of the imagination. As a result of this re-kindling of love within the breast of Prometheus, therefore, his creative faculty gradually assumes control and, through this mode of mental action, the entire world undergoes a transfiguration. The "dark veil" is lifted from the mind of Prometheus, Jupiter sinks to oblivion, and Prometheus and Asia are re-united.

The extraordinary complexity of Prometheus Unbound can best be explained in terms of the enormous difficulty involved in dramatizing, as a dream might be said to dramatize, the creative process. What Shelley is presenting is a psychic activity that, he believed, has nothing to do

with "the conscious portions of our natures".

> A man cannot say, "I will compose poetry." The greatest poet even cannot say it: for the mind in creation is as a fading coal, which some invisible influence, like an inconstant wind, awakens to transitory brightness: this power arises from within, like the colour of a flower which fades and changes as it is developed, and the conscious portions of our natures are unprophetic either of its approach or its departure.[31]

It is this power, arising from within and quickened by "some invisible influence" until it reaches its apocalyptic moment that annihilates the familiar world and then gradually fades, that Shelley attempts to describe in the drama.

In the Hymn to Intellectual Beauty the apocalyptic moment, the approach of which "the conscious portions of our natures are unprophetic ", is vividly described:

> When musing deeply on the lot
> Of life, at that sweet time when winds are wooing
> All vital things that wake to bring
> News of birds and blossoming,-
> Sudden, thy shadow fell on me;
> I shrieked, and clasped my hands in ecstasy!

What Shelley attempts in Prometheus Unbound, however, is something far more complex: he attempts to present the gradual approach of the apocalyptic moment within the unconscious portions of our natures. What comes as a revelatory shock to the conscious mind is something which is gathering and shaping itself in the unconscious. Prometheus Unbound, from this point of view, may be described as a drama of the unconscious. The term "unconscious" is here used in the sense of that Shelley uses it: that portion of the mind

which is not subject to the will and is altogether distinct from "the conscious portions of our natures". It is the prototype which man, what, in his Essay on Christianity, he calls (quoting Bacon) the "'idola specus' - peculiar images which reside in the inner core of thought."[32]

One of the first evidences of the welling up of love within Prometheus is the gradual way in which pain begins to give way to joy. Having recalled the curse upon Jupiter, he is overcome at first by the vision of Jupiter's world. His state of mind is presented in the form of Furies sent by Jupiter to heap further tortures on him. Consequently, his visionary powers are clouded as there comes before his mind the past and the present. The Furies cry:

> Past ages crowd on thee, but each one remembers,
> And the future is dark, and the present is spread
> Like a pillow of thorns for thy slumberless head.
> (I, 560-562.)

The "pillow of thorns" is a reference to the crucifixion of Christ in whose suffering Prometheus sees not only an image of his own suffering but a revelation of both past and present. Worse still, he sees that the suffering of Christ was all in vain, for the faith he released was perverted into new forms of tyranny. Once again, however, his heart gives way to pity, though mixed with deep despair.

But his act of forgiveness has released his spirit and

the Furies disappear to be replaced by "those subtle and fair spirits,/ Whose homes are the dim waves of human thought" (I, 658-659). Now Prometheus is able, once again, to get a glimpse of the future; these spirits behold "beyond that twilight realm, as in a glass,/ The future" (I, 662). His imagination, at war with the familiar world of Jupiter, begins the process of recreation. The imagination, says Shelley, "creates anew the universe, after it has been annihilated in our minds by the recurrence of impressions blunted by reiteration." On the precipice of his own dormant imagination, Prometheus has suffered this annihilation; but the restoration of his creative power is at hand. The spirits bring a prophecy of renewal; there is a change in the atmosphere of Prometheus's thought which these spirits feel as the "wandering herdsmen" feel, with the coming of the mild winds of Spring, that "the white-thorn soon will blow" (I, 794-795). And with that prophecy of renewal they depart. The "sense" of them remains however, echoing "thro' the deep and labyrinthine soul" (I, 805) of Prometheus.

"We are aware", says Shelley in his Defense,

> of evanescent visitations of thought and feeling sometimes associated with place or person, sometimes regarding our own mind alone, and always arising unforeseen and departing unbidden, but elevating and delightful beyond all expression: so that even in the desire and regret they leave, there cannot but be pleasure, participating as it does in the nature of its object. It is as it were the interpenetration of a diviner nature through our own; but its footsteps are like

those of a wind over a sea, which the coming calm erases, and whose traces remain only, as on the wrinkled sand which paves it. . . . Poets are not only subject to these experiences as spirits of the most refined organization, but they can colour all that they combine with the evanescent hues of this ethereal world; a word, or a trait in the representation of a scene or a passion, will touch the enchanted chord, and reanimate, in those who have ever experienced these emotions, the sleeping, the cold, the buried image of the past. Poetry thus makes immortal all that is best and most beautiful in the world; it arrests the vanishing apparitions which haunt the interlunations of life, and veiling them, or in language or in form, sends them forth among mankind.[33] . .

What, at the end of the first act, Prometheus is experiencing is, to use Shelley's words, "the interpenetration of a diviner nature through our own". What is presented in the spirits that come to comfort and to prophesy is the "vanishing apparitions which haunt the interlunations of life". And Shelley is presenting them not so much in their arrested form as in the Hymn to Intellectual Beauty, but in the actual process of arising from within. Prometheus Unbound presents, as it were, the slow movement of the shaping spirit through the labyrinth of the soul.

This "interpenetration of a diviner nature" into the soul of Prometheus is expressed in Prometheus's growing awareness of Asia, the "light of life," the "shadow of beauty unbeheld", the "awful shadow" of the Hymn to Intellectual Beauty. The personification of this psychic awareness is presented through Panthea. Panthea is, as it were, the ether through which the psychic force of love is communicated back and forth between Prometheus and Asia. She is the

message bearer, and gazing into her eyes, Asia can see the form of Prometheus and read the prophetic tidings of his imagination. Addressing her, therefore, Asia calls her "the shadow of that soul by which I live" (II, ii, 31). Prometheus, in turn, addresses her as the shadow of Asia. Thus, it is Panthea who reminds Prometheus thatAsia waits for him,and goes off at the end of the act to bring or transmit the renewing love of Prometheus to Asia.

Asia, in her vale in the Indian Caucasus, is aware that Panthea is approaching; she feels, that is, within herself, the approach of Prometheus's love. This sense of Prometheus's awakened awareness of her is suggested, however, not only through Panthea,but through the imagery as well. When the spirits prophesy to Prometheus, they say:

> Wisdom, Justice, Love, and Peace,
> When they struggle to increase,
> Are to us as soft winds be
> To shepherd boys, the prophecy
> Which begins and ends in thee.
> (I, 796-800.)

The awakening of Prometheus, that is, is compared to the coming of the spring. The coming of the spring "like a spirit, like a thought" (II, i, 2) is the subject of Asia's opening soliloquy. To her this renewal of nature is

> Like genius, or like joy which riseth up
> As from the earth, clothing with golden clouds
> The desert of our life.
> (II, i, 10-12.)

The renewal of life in the world of nature, says Panthea, is the result of the "transforming presence" (I, 833) of

Asia. And this "transforming presence", Panthea further says to Prometheus, "would fade/ If it were mingled not with thine" (I, 833-834). The emergence of spring, in other words, is prophetic of the re-union of Prometheus and Asia. What Shelley is describing, viewed from within, is the recreation of the universe through the visionary power of imagination. It is this idea that receives an intensely focused treatment in the Ode to the West Wind; the upsurge of imaginative, prophetic power in the poet shares an imaginative identity with the renewal of life in nature.

The dialogue between Panthea and Asia which follows upon Panthea's arrival introduces another of the "evanescent hues of the ethereal world", Ione, and further clarifies the psychic relationships between Prometheus, Asia, Panthea and Ione. In the Hymn to Intellectual Beauty, though the "awful shadow of some unseen Power" visits "this various world with an inconstant wing", it never completely deserts it. Asia and Prometheus, while separated, yet preserve, though Prometheus is bound and Asia is exiled, some form of psychic relationship. The "shadow" of this relationship is revealed in Panthea and Ione. Their winged presence together in the poem suggests the larger presence of Prometheus and Asia as united lovers. This larger presence is the controlling vision of the poem. The function of Panthea and Ione is suggested by Shelley in Panthea's account

of her dreams which she had while sleeping at the feet of Prometheus, Ione locked in her embrace.

In sleep Panthea dreams that his "pale wound-worn limbs" (II, i, 62) fell away and revealed "the glory of that form/ Which lives unchanged within"(II, i, 64-65). She gazed upon him and saw that "that immortal shape was shadowed o'er/ By love"(ii, i, 72-73). Into this overpowering love, she was absorbed so that her blood became "his life, and his grew mine"(II, i, 81). And of all the words he uttered only the name, Asia, could she make out. As she lay thinking of this dream, Ione awakened, troubled by the sense of unfamiliar desire:

> . . . for when just now
> We kissed, I felt within thy parted lips
> The sweet air that sustained me, and the warmth
> Of the life-blood, for loss of which I faint,
> Quivered between our intertwining arms.
> (II, i, 102-106.)

What Shelley presents here is the "shadow" of the love-union between Prometheus and Asia which is prophetic of the union that is to come. It is, as it were, the sensuous aspect of the spiritual union.

This curious foreshadowing on the part of Shelley acts as a series of echoes or reverberations of the central vision of the poem by means of which Shelley is able to suggest the infusing power of love, moving like the shaping and re-creating spirit of the imagination within the poem itself, and turning "all things to loveliness." Poetry,

as the expression of the imagination, says Shelley, "transmutes all that it touches, and every form moving within the radiance of its presence is changed by wondrous sympathy to an incarnation of the spirit which it breathes".[34] Gradually all the elements of the poem come within this presence, becoming, thereby, the incarnation of the spirit of Prometheus and Asia united in love. The drama moves steadily towards its "epiphany".

When Asia gazes into the eyes of Panthea, she sees, in addition to Prometheus, a shape that stands between them. This shape contains the significance of Panthea's second dream which she could not remember. The voice in that dream now speaks and tells her to follow. At the sound of that voice, Panthea recalls her dream: the buds on a lightning-blasted almond tree suddenly burst and then fell as a chill wind swept through the earth bringing frost. This dream, of course, is prophetic of the fall of Jupiter, and the voice is that of Demogorgon calling Asia and Panthea to his cave.

Demogorgon has already been identified with the eternal order of the universe viewed in terms of the force that governs it. It is the image of this order that the shaping spirit of the imagination creates. Why, from the point of view of the creative process itself, is it necessary for Asia to go to the cave of Demogorgon? Prometheus bound to the precipice denotes a failure of vision; only

the past and the present come clearly before his mind's eye because the future is veiled. When Asia comes before Demogorgon, she too can only describe the past and the present. Yet both know that Prometheus is destined to be released and the reign of Jupiter brought to an end; this knowledge, however, is but dimly perceived. The poet, however, says Shelley in his Defense, "not only beholds intensely the present as it is, and discovers those laws according to which present things ought to be ordered, but he beholds the future in the present, and his thoughts are the germs of the flower and the fruit of latest time."[35] This power of the poet to "imagine and express this indestructible order"[36] lies in the poet's ability to "draw into a certain propinquity with the beautiful and the true, that partial apprehension of the agencies of the invisible world which is called religion."[37] What Asia receives in the cave of Demogorgon is "that partial apprehension of the agencies of the invisible world". The cave of Demogorgon, Shelley describes as a "mighty portal" (II, iii, 2), the source from which all life emerges and to which ultimately all life returns. Panthea and Asia have been led

> To the deep, to the deep,
> Down, down!
> Through the shade of sleep,
> Through the cloudy strife
> Of death and life;
> Through the veil and the bar
> Of things which seem and are
> Even to the steps of the remotest throne,
> Down, down.
> (II, iii, 54-62.)

Viewed from within the mind, the cave of Demogorgon is the storehouse of impressions, formless in itself, existing in the unconscious. Shelley calls this inner cavern of the mind "the invisible nature of man";[38] within that "invisible nature" the throne of "that imperial faculty",[39] the imagination, is "curtained"[40] as Demogorgon is curtained upon his throne. In entering the cave of Demogorgon, therefore, Asia has penetrated to the "invisible nature" of Prometheus, to the depths of his inner being. From that centre, the very portal of life, she quickens his "imperial faculty" as, in the Hymn to Intellectual Beauty, the "awful shadow of some unseen Power" quickened the poet to dedicate his powers to the freeing of the world from its "dark slavery."

In the cave of Demogorgon the past and present are presented in their visionary or mythological form. The "immortal Hours" (II, v, 140) rush past in swift profusion, one of which waits for Asia to bring her to Prometheus. Its "brethren" wait for Demogorgon to take him to Jupiter. In other words, the apocalyptic hour has arrived; eternity is revealed in the totality of the imagination's cyclic vision. "The visitations of the divinity in man" have been redeemed from decay. The first evidence of this transmutation of the "secret alchemy" which "turns to potable gold the poisonous waters which flow from death through life"[41]

is the transformation of Asia. She is now revealed in the fulness of her glory, as the spirit of Love which burst, at the dawn of life, upon the world and turned "all things to loveliness."[42]

> How thou art changed! I dare not look on thee;
> I feel but see thee not. I scarce endure
> The radiance of thy beauty. Some good change
> Is working in the elements, which suffer
> Thy presence thus unveiled. The Nereids tell
> That on the day when the clear hyaline
> Was cloven at thine uprise, and thou didst stand
> Within a veined shell, which floated on
> Over the calm floor of the crystal sea,
> Among the Aegean isles, and by the shores
> Which bear thy name; love, like the atmosphere
> Of the sun's fire filling the living world,
> Burst from thee, and illumined earth and heaven
> And the deep ocean and the sunless caves
> And all that dwells within them; til grief cast
> Eclipse upon the soul from which it came:
> Such art thou now; nor is it I alone,
> Thy sister, thy companion, thine own chosen one,
> But the whole world which seeks thy sympathy.
> Hearest thou not sounds i' the air which speak the love
> Of all articulate beings? Feelest thou not
> The inanimate winds enamoured of thee?
> (II, v, 16-17.)

The words which Panthea here speaks are, says Asia, the echoes of Prometheus's voice. The veils of the familiar world, symbolized by the reign of Jupiter, have fallen away and "the naked and sleeping beauty, which is the spirit of its forms", has been laid bare. That "sleeping beauty" is Asia, the spirit which, to the eye of the imagination, pervades the forms of nature.

When Asia moves toward the cave of Demogorgon, the spirits which direct her describe in song her journey into

the soul's interior. She moves, they sing,

> Through the cloudy strife
> Of Death and of Life;
> Through the veil and the bar
> Of things which seem and are.
> (II, iii, 57-60.)

When Asia ascends the car of the Spirit of the Hour she describes her experience in the cave of Demogorgon:

> We have pass'd Age's icy caves,
> And Manhood's dark and tossing waves,
> And Youth's smooth ocean, smiling to betray:
> Beyond the glassy gulfs we flee
> Of shadow-peopled Infancy,
> Through Death and Birth, to a diviner day.
> (II, v, 98-103.)

Having passed, that is, "through the cloudy strife/ Of Death and of Life", she has emerged on the other side "to a diviner day." What Shelley here suggests is the "secret alchemy" of the imagination which "turns to potable gold the poisonous waters which flow from death through life".

The apocalyptic vision, says Shelley, is actually the arresting of the "vanishing apparitions which haunt the interlunations of life".[43] As such it is the "record of the best and happiest moments of the happiest and best minds."[44] In the descent of Jupiter into oblivion, the unbinding of Prometheus by Hercules and the reunion of Prometheus and Asia, therefore, he is really dramatizing what is, in reality, the "vanishing apparitions" which are arrested for a moment in those "best and happiest minds." These events, which compose the larger part of the third

act, must, consequently, be considered as taking place within the mind of Prometheus simultaneously. They are the climax of an imaginative process belonging to a single hour which contains within it eternity. Significantly enough, therefore, it is the Spirit of the Hour which, at the end of the third act, describes the transformation of the entire earth:

> The painted veil, by those who were, called life,
> Which mimicked, as with colours idly spread,
> All men believed or hoped, is torn aside;
> The loathsome mask has fallen, the Man remains,-
> Sceptreless, free, uncircumscribed, - but man:
> Equal, unclassed, tribeless, and nationless,
> Exempt from awe, worship, degree, the King
> Over himself; just, gentle, wise; - but man.
> (III, iv, 190-197.)

The "painted veil" is the "veil of familiarity" which "annihilates" the universe by obscuring "from us the wonder of our being".[45] It is the "dome of many-coloured glass" which "stains the white radiance of Eternity" (Adonais, 462-463). The "Man" who remains after "the loathsome mask has fallen" is the "being within our being",[46] the divinity in man which is "sceptreless, free, uncircumscribed". When this divinity is released, man becomes the inhabitant "of a world to which the familiar world is a chaos."

This transfigured world is presented in the fourth act; it is the recreated cosmos, the antitype of the prototype within man. Throughout the poem this apocalyptic moment has been gradually emerging within the mind of Prometheus.

Shelley has presented its gradual emergence on two levels which are, in reality, one. On the one hand, he presents it in terms of Prometheus's victory over Jupiter (the symbol of his fallen nature), and, on the other, he presents it in terms of his re-union with Asia (the antitype of his divine nature). For Shelley, the revolutionary impulse in man is Eros. Prometheus destroys Jupiter by transforming his hate into love; his love for Asia annihilates Jupiter. The first three acts focus upon the destruction of Jupiter; the last act focuses upon the re-union of Prometheus and Asia.

The last act, therefore, may best be described as an epithalamion. Asia and Prometheus, however, are now presented not as separate entities but as united lovers. As united lovers, they are one soul, a single form which contains within it the entire cosmos.

> Man, oh, not men! a chain of linked thought,
> Of love and might to be divided not,
> Compelling the elements with adamantine stress;
> As the sun rules, even with a tyrant's gaze,
> The unquiet republic of the maze
> Of planets, struggling fierce towards heaven's free wilderness.
>
> Man, one harmonious soul of many a soul,
> Whose nature is its own divine controul,
> Where all things flow to all, as rivers to the sea;
> Familiar acts are beautiful through love;
> Labour, and pain, and grief, in life's green grove
> Sport like tame beasts, none knew how gentle they could be!
>
> His will, with all mean passions, bad delights,
> And selfish cares, its trembling satellites,
> A spirit ill to guide, but mighty to obey,
> Is as a tempest-winged ship, whose helm

Love rules, through waves which dare not overwhelm,
Forcing life's wildest shores to own its sovereign sway.

All things confess his strength. Through the cold mass
Of marble and of colour his dreams pass;
Bright threads whence mothers weave the robes their children wear;
Language is a perpetual Orphic song,
Which rules with Daedal harmony a throng
Of thoughts and forms, which else senseless and shapeless were.

The lightning is his slave; heaven's utmost deep
Gives up her stars, and like a flock of sheep
They pass before his eye, are numbered, and roll on.
The tempest is his steed, he strides the air;
And the abyss shouts from her depth laid bare,
Heaven hast thou secrets? Man unveils me; I have none.
(IV, 394-422.)

Prometheus and Asia have become one, and their union is the recreated universe. The spirit of love which animates every ecstatic atom of the singing world is the absorption of Prometheus and Asia into it. Every form of nature takes on the life of the united lovers. The spirits of Earth and Air, which are the spirits "that come from the mind/ Of human kind" (IV, 93-94), together "weave the web of the mystic measure" (IV, 129).

And Earth, Air, and Light,
And the Spirit of Might,
Which drives round the stars in their fiery flight;
And Love, Thought, and Breath,
The powers that quell Death,
Wherever we soar shall assemble beneath.

And our singing shall build
In the void's loose field
A world for the Spirit of Wisdom to wield;
We will take out plan
From the new world of man,
And our work shall be called Promethean.
(IV, 147-158.)

The nuptials of Asia and Prometheus are celebrated in the passionate love-dialogue between the feminine moon and the masculine earth. The consummation of their love is a vision of cosmic harmony, which is, in turn, the antitype of union of Prometheus and Asia. The moon addresses the earth:

> The snow upon my lifeless mountains
> Is loosened into living fountains,
> My solid oceans flow, and sing, and shine:
> A spirit from my heart bursts forth,
> It clothes with unexpected birth
> My cold bare bosom: Oh! it must be thine
> On mine, on mine!
>
> Gazing on thee, I feel, I know,
> Green stalks burst forth, and bright flowers grow,
> And living shapes upon my bosom move:
> Music is in the sea and air,
> Winged clouds soar here and there,
> Dark with the rain new buds are dreaming of:
> 'Tis love, all love!
> (IV, 356-369.)

The movement of the moon around the earth, and the earth's movement around the sun is the antitype of Prometheus's and Asia's nuptial bliss, in which they merge to become "Man, one harmonious soul of many a soul,/ Whose nature is its own divine controul".

> Thou art speeding round the sun,
> Brightest world of many a one;
> Green and azure sphere which shinest
> With a light that is divinest
> Among all the lamps of Heaven
> To whom life and light is given;
> I, thy crystal paramour,
> Born beside thee by a power
> Like the polar paradise,
> Magnet-like of lovers' eyes;
> I, a most enamoured maiden,

Whose weak brain is overladen
With the pleasure of her love,
Manic-like around thee move
Gazing, an insatiate bride,
On thy form from every side
Like a Maenad, round the cup
Which Agave lifted up
In the weird Cadmaean forest.
Brother, wheresoe'er thou soarest,
I must hurry, whirl and follow.
Through the heavens wide and hollow,
Sheltered by the warm embrace
Of thy soul from hungry space,
Drinking from thy sense and sight
Beauty, majesty, and might.
(IV, 457-482.)

The apocalyptic vision of the fourth act is the true hieromania of Orphism, the final phase of the Orphic myth. Language has become

. . . a perpetual Orphic song,
Which rules with Daedal harmony a throng
Of thoughts and forms, which else senseless and shapeless were.

The ecstatic circular movement of the planets is

Like a Maenad, round the cup
Which Agave lifted up
In the weird Cadmaean forest.

In the cup that Agave raised is the wine of life. Those who drink from it are possessed by the god, Dionysus. In his translation of Plato's Ion, Shelley says:

Thus the composers of lyrical poetry create those admired songs of theirs in a state of divine insanity, like the Corybantes, who lose all control over their reason in the enthusiasm of the sacred dance; and, during the supernatural possession, are excited to the rhythm and harmony which they communicate to men. Like the Bacchantes, who, when possessed by the God draw honey and milk from the rivers, in which, when they come to their senses, they find nothing but simple water.[47]

Viewed in this light, Shelley emerges in Prometheus Unbound as a Dionysian poet composing Dithyrambs in a state of hieromania. The poem, therefore, is the realization of the Orphic theory of poetry which he presents in his Defense.

Prometheus Unbound presents, in poetic form, the Orphic scheme of salvation and, as such, is the total form of Shelley's apocalyptic vision. The first intimations of the Orphic vision of human redemption is present in Queen Mab. In that poem, however, Shelley had not yet emancipated himself from the mechanistic determinism of D'Holbach. In Prometheus Unbound, on the other hand, the emancipation is complete. Jupiter is the world viewed as something external to man; his law is the mechanistic philosophy of the philosophes. Prometheus, as the symbol of the creative faculty in man, defeats the curse of Jupiter, the "curse which binds us to be subjected to the accident of surrounding impressions." He thus makes "us the inhabitants of a world to which the familiar world is a chaos."

The symbol of this release is the union of Prometheus and Asia. Imagination and love are thus identified. The imaginative act by which man recreates the universe is an idealized expression of his erotic nature. It is for this reason that Shelley presents his apocalyptic vision in the last act of Prometheus Unbound in terms of sexual union,

"The sexual impulse," he says in his Discourse on the Manners of the Antients, ". . . serves, from its obvious and external nature, as a kind or type or expression of the rest, a common basis, an acknowledged visible link."[48] By "the rest", Shelley means "the universal thirst for a communion not merely of the senses, but of the whole nature, intellectual, imaginative and sensitive."[49] The apocalyptic vision is the spiritual form of sexual union.

The erotic and Promethean aspects of Shelley's apocalyptic vision are fused into an ideal unity in Prometheus Unbound. And here again Shelley reveals the extent of his psychic development beyond the limitations of his two earlier attempts at an apocalyptic vision. In The Revolt of Islam, the pattern of separated and re-united lovers within the larger framework of an ideal revolution adumbrates the vision of Prometheus Unbound. In the former poem, however, the erotic and Promethean elements are not fused. The re-union of Laon and Cythna comes after their death so that the Promethean revolution is only set in motion and not fully realized. The source of the failure is essentially the same as in Queen Mab. The psychic drama which purports to trace the growth of individual mind in its effort to recover its hidden divinity is set over against an external world viewed as something separate from the condition of mind that makes it external. The conflict within

the poem lies in the effort on Shelley's part to write what is essentially an allegory, as a "mere human" story. In Prometheus Unbound, the external world is symbolized in Jupiter; i.e., it is viewed as a mode of perception belonging to the fallen nature of man. In The Revolt of Islam evil is external to man; in Prometheus Unbound, it is internal. Because, in the former poem, evil is external, Shelley did not yet know how to cope with it imaginatively. He therefore took the only way out; the victory of good over evil belongs to the distant ages; for the lovers - "No more let life divide what death can join together" (Adonais, 477).

In the weaning of Shelley away from eighteenth-century mechanistic philosophy, the Orphic scheme of Newton played, as already pointed out, a significant part. The imaginative education which Newton began was completed by Plato. Shelley identifies his Prometheus with Plato's Demi-urge in the Timaeus. Prometheus has brought forth out of the realm of Necessity an imaginative order which reflects the world of the Forms. For Shelley, of course, the world of Ideas in Plato's philosophy is imaginatively understood as the prototype within man. The realm of Necessity, he interprets primarily in terms of mechanistic determinism. The mechanistic universe is, viewed in imaginative perspective, a chaos. Thus, he is able to equate mechanistic

determinism with Plato's definition of Necessity as "errant cause" or chance.

Through the Orphic scheme, Shelley sought to recreate the Christian archetypal pattern of creation, fall, redemption and apocalypse and thereby redeem it from the perversions of the theologians. "All original religions", he says in the Defense, "are allegorical, or susceptible of allegory, and, like Janus, have a double face of false and true."[50] Jupiter, Shelley believed, is the false face of religion, the angry Jehovah of institutional Christianity. The annihilation of Jupiter, therefore, is the redemption of man, and the redemption of man, in turn, is the risen Jupiter, i.e., Jupiter recreated by the imagination. The redemptive role of Prometheus, Shelley identifies with the role of Christ, who sought, he argues, to destroy and recreate the Old Testament Jehovah. And Christ's role, he argues in his Defense, was to "divulge the sacred and eternal truths contained in these views [the doctrines of Timaeus and Pythagoras] to mankind."[51] Christianity, in its true form, is , therefore, "the exoteric expression of the esoteric doctrines of the poetry and wisdom of antiquity."[52]

Viewed in this light, the Christian archetypal pattern is to be understood with reference to the "invisible nature of man." By creation, Shelley means the imaginative activity of the poet: "Non merita nome di creatore, se non Iddio ed il Poeta."[53] God, the Creator, is "the image of

all other minds."[54] He is simply the divinity within man, the devoured Dionysus mixed with the ashes of the Titans, from which the race of man was created in its fallen form. By fall, Shelley means the externalization of man's divinity into the vision of God as a Being separate from man. The Christian religion with its conception of an external God is, therefore, to Shelley, the archetypal image of fallen man. By redemption, Shelley means the recreation of this external image of God so that it becomes once again the antitype of the prototype within man. This is the role of Christ in the New Testament and of Prometheus in Prometheus Unbound. By apocalypse, Shelley means a vision of the universe as the antitype of man's ideal nature, a vision, that is, of the unfallen world. This is the theme of the last act.

This imaginative view of the Christian archetypal pattern in which Christ becomes a Dionysian hero is the controlling vision of Prometheus Unbound. It is essentially the Orphic pattern of the soul in its original purity descending into the flesh and being restored in a state of hieromania to its original divine form.

The hieromanic state, however, in which the self is dissolved into the psychic creation of the imagination, cannot be long sustained. "But in the intervals of inspiration," says Shelley," and they may be frequent without be-

ing durable, a Poet becomes a man, and is abandoned to the sudden reflux of the influences under which others habitually live."[55] The mind in creation is "a fading coal,"[56] and "when composition begins, inspiration is already on the decline."[57] Nevertheless, the inspired moments have a lasting effect; it produces "in the mind an habit of order and harmony correlative with its own nature and with its effects upon other minds."[58]

That inspiration must inevitably fade, that its effect may be lasting both on the mind of the poet as well as on all other minds, is the message of Demogorgon with which the poem concludes. "This is the day," he says, in which "Love. . . folds over the world its healing wings." However, "Eternity" may again release "the serpent that would clasp her with his length" (IV, 567). In the vision of Prometheus, however, the world has a symbol of "Gentleness, Virtue, Wisdom, and Endurance" (IV, 562) which can act as "the spells by which to reassume/ An empire o'er the disentangled doom" (IV, 568-569).

In Prometheus Unbound, therefore, Shelley has not only presented the creative process which culminates in the apocalyptic vision, but related it, as he does in A Defense of Poetry, to its wider social implications. Because of the effect of his vision upon those who come within its influence, poets are "the unacknowledged legislators of the world."[59]

Chapter 8

ALASTOR AND EPIPSYCHIDION

The two mythopoeic poets (excepting Plato) who influenced Shelley more than any others were Dante and Milton. Each of them, he believed, presented a single apocalyptic vision, though from different angles. Their single vision, having, he believed, its origin in the resurrection of classical antiquity during the Renaissance, served, "as a bridge thrown over the stream of time, which unites the modern and antient World."[1] Precisely what, according to Shelley, was resurrected from the ancient world during the Renaissance was the doctrine of Eros. The revolutionary implications of that doctrine Milton expressed in the creation of his Satan. Satan, he believed, emerges from Paradise Lost as the archetypal image of the divinity within man, the aspiring imagination that would destroy the "veil of familiarity"[2] and recreate from within the entire universe. In Dante, this same vision is present, though stript of its Promethean implications. He is concerned

"with the secret things of love"[3] viewed in terms of those inner gradations by which the psyche becomes one with its epipsyche.

In both The Revolt of Islam and Prometheus Unbound, Shelley incorporated both aspects of this single vision. The transfiguration of Asia in Prometheus Unbound is the analogue of Dante's "apotheosis of Beatrice in Paradise".[4] The events in Prometheus Unbound leading up to this transfiguration of Asia are the analogue of "the gradations of his [Dante's] own love and her [Beatrice's] loveliness, by which as by steps he feigns himself to have ascended to the throne of the Supreme Cause".[5] In this sense, Dante's beatific vision and Shelley's apocalyptic vision are one and the same.

The transfiguration of Asia and the events leading up to it (the psyche-epipsyche theme in Prometheus Unbound), however, have a thoroughly revolutionary significance. The counterpart of Asia's transfiguration is the unbinding of Prometheus; in fact, they are the same event viewed from two separate angles of vision. The unbinding of Prometheus, in turn, is the overthrow of Jupiter and the establishment of a new age of love. And here Shelley found his analogue in Milton's Satan. In the unbinding of Prometheus, Shelley completed the redemptive process underway in Milton's disguised vision.

This same double-edged vision is present in The Revolt of Islam: the psyche-epipsyche theme fuses with the eagle-serpent conflict; the love of Laon and Cythna is an instance of the victory, though only partial, of the serpent over the eagle.

In his Epipsychidion, written in 1821, Shelley follows Dante's vision, isolating it from its Promethean implications. The poem, therefore, redeems the arrested vision of Alastor in which the youth fails to become one with his epipsyche. Alastor, written in 1815, like the Epipsychidion, deals with the non-Promethean aspect of Eros. On the basis of the inner discoveries made between 1815 and 1819 which are 'writ large' in the love theme in The Revolt of Islam and Prometheus Unbound, Shelley, as it were, brought to its psychic fulfillment the arrested vision of Alastor. It is from this point of view that the two poems must now be considered. It will, in turn, throw further light upon the apocalyptic vision in Prometheus Unbound.

Shelley's doctrine of Eros has already been examined in detail in the third chapter. In that analysis three distinct aspects of the doctrine were brought out: Eros as a revolutionary Promethean force; Eros as the union of the psyche with its epipsyche; Eros as mystical union with the One (Nirvana). This last aspect will be explored in the chapters on Adonais and The Triumph of Life; in this

chapter only the psyche-epipsyche theme is relevant.

In his brief essay, On Love, Shelley provides a definition of love in terms of the psyche's quest for its epipsyche. Love, he says,

> is that powerful attraction towards all that we conceive, or fear, or hope beyond ourselves, when we find within our own thoughts the chasm of an insufficient void, and seek to awaken in all things that are, a community with what we experience within ourselves. . . . We are born into the world, and there is something within us which, from the instant that we live, more and more thirsts after its likeness. It is probably in correspondence with this law that the infant drains milk from the bosom of its mother; this propensity develops itself with the development of our nature . We dimly see within our intellectual nature a miniature as it were of our entire self, yet deprived of all that we condemn or despise, the ideal prototype of everything excellent or lovely that we are capable of conceiving as belonging to the nature of man. . . a soul within our soul that describes a circle around its proper paradise, which pain, and sorrow, and evil dare not overleap. To this we eagerly refer all sensations, thirsting that they should resemble or correspond with it. The discovery of its antitype; the meeting with an understanding capable of clearly estimating our own . . . this is the invisible and unattainable point to which Love tends.[6]

The poet's "ideal prototype" remains "the chasm of an insufficient void" until it meets with its "antitype". Once that discovery is made, however, the soul "describes a circle around its proper paradise, which pain, and sorrow, and evil dare not overleap." This circle contains the apocalyptic vision. Viewed entirely in terms of the union of the psyche and epipsyche, Shelley presents this "proper paradise" as the gardens of Adonis to which the lovers escape, leaving the world of pain and evil behind. Viewed in terms of its Promethean implications the entire universe

becomes a bower presided over by the ruling spirit of Love. In Prometheus Unbound, for example, Prometheus and Asia, at the end of the third act, retire to their enchanted cave in the midst of a forest where spring is perpetual. At the same time the entire universe, as in the fourth act, is presented under the enchantment of the spirit of their union in love.

Before Shelley could fuse so successfully the Promethean and erotic aspects of his apocalyptic vision, he had to clarify, on the one hand, his own inner needs in terms of their psychic demands, and, on the other, relate those needs to a larger metaphysical structure which embraced man's whole relationship to the universe. He had, that is, to arrive at what Mary Shelley calls the "metaphysical anatomy of human passion and perception."[7]

Of the realization of the first of these requirements, Shelley has left a rather detailed record. His essay On Love, his letters to Elizabeth Hitchener (among others), his dedication stanzas to Mary in The Revolt of Islam, his portrayal of Laon and Cythna, Prometheus and Asia, all reveal that Shelley made articulate to himself his own psychic needs, the resolution of which required the union, on all levels, of his own psyche with its female counterpart.

In relating this purely personal need (which is the

theme of most of his lyrics) to what he calls his "'passion for reforming the world'",[8] it was necessary for him to conceive of his own psychic nature in universal terms. During the earlier phase of his career when he was under the direct influence of Godwin, Shelley was unable to relate the two. His letter to Elizabeth Hitchener (June 11, 1811) defines his problem:

> I recommend reason. - Why? Is it because, since I have devoted myself unreservedly to its influencing, I have never felt Happiness? I have rejected all fancy, all imagination; I find that all pleasure resulting to self is thereby completely annihilated.[9]

This reconciliation, which he could not find in Godwinism, he found in his reading of Greek mythopoeic literature. Shelley, Mary says, was fascinated by the drama of Aeschylus because "the interest on which he founds his drama is often elevated above human vicissitudes into the mighty passions and throes of gods and demi-gods".[10] This more universal and impersonal perspective, she adds, "fascinated the abstract imagination of Shelley."[11]

What Shelley gained from the Greeks was the discovery of the archetype. In Plato's dialogues, particularly the Symposium, the Ion and the Timaeus, he discovered the "metaphysical anatomy" of his own psychic nature and out of this discovery emerged the great works of his maturity. Of Prometheus Unbound, he says that "it is a drama, with characters and mechanism of a kind yet unattempted."[12] When

Shelley wrote the drama, he was deeply immersed in Greek literature; his archetypal figures he found in Aeschylus, his idealistic vision of love he found in Plato, and both were the revelation of his "ideal prototype".

What Alastor and Epipsychidion share in common is, as already pointed out, their concern with the psyche-epipsyche theme; what they do not share in common, however, is the realization of its metaphysical significance. In Alastor, the epipsyche is a "veiled maid" (151) and the veil is not removed; in the Epipsychidion, she stands forth revealed in the fulness of her naked splendour. Between the two poems there is, therefore, a profound difference, which can best be explained in terms of the kind of inner awakening that came with Shelley's discovery of the eternal form of his own psychic nature. With the discovery of that form the arrested vision of Alastor was redeemed. The Episychidion brings to an end the summer and autumn periods of Shelley's career. In Adonais and the Triumph of Life, he moves into a final phase in which the vision of his maturity merges with its "ideal prototype" and both disappear.

In the Notes to Queen Mab, Shelley makes a distinction between the external order of the universe and the internal order of man. He is talking about the doctrine of Necessity and wishes to show that this doctrine "tends to

introduce a great change into the established notions of morality and utterly to destroy religion."[13] Here is his argument:

> Religion is the perception of the relation in which we stand to the principle of the universe. But if the principle of the universe be not an organic being, the model and prototype of man, the relation between it and human beings is absolutely none. Without some insight into its will respecting our actions, religion is nugatory and vain. But will is only a mode of animal mind; moral qualities also are such as only a human being can possess; to attribute them to the principle of the universe, is to annex to it properties incompatible with any possible definition of its nature.[14]

This statement goes a long way toward defining the fundamental problem with which Shelley is dealing in Alastor. The youth, as he describes him in the Preface, is, up to a point, a typical Godwinian: "a youth of uncorrupted feelings and adventurous genius led forth by an imagination inflamed and purified through familiarity with all that is excellent and majestic, to a contemplation of the universe."[15] One can see in this picture the kind of person that Godwin attempted to make of Shelley; one, that is, who would take up his abode on "the pinnacle of the ages" and view sub specie aeternitatis the workings of Necessity. "So long", Shelley goes on in his preface, "as it is possible for his desires to point towards objects thus infinite and unmeasured, he is joyous, and tranquil, and self-possessed."[16] He is, that is, a typical Godwinian philosopher, not given over to misguided zeal to change the world over night.

As Shelley soon discovered, however, he could not fit himself into Godwin's pattern; Godwin's abstract philosophy ignored the very concrete demands of his own inner nature. And it is precisely this fact that the youth in Alastor comes to realize. "But the period arrives", Shelley continues, "when these objects cease to suffice. His mind is suddenly awakened and thirsts for intercourse with an intelligence similar to itself."[17] And that "intelligence similar to itself" could not be found in the contemplation of the universe because "the relation between it and human beings is absolutely nothing."

The youth, as a consequence,

> images to himself the Being whom he loves. Conversant with speculations of the sublimest and most perfect natures, the vision in which he embodies his own imaginations unites all of wonderful, or wise, or beautiful, which the poet, the philosopher, or the lover could depicture. The intellectual faculties, the imagination, the functions of the sense, have their respective requisitions on the sympathy of corresponding powers in other human beings. The Poet is represented as uniting all these requisitions, and attaching them to a single image.[18]

The youth, in other words, has awakened to the fact that he is something more than a philosopher; he is also a poet and a lover. The problem he faces is how to integrate into a single image all three aspects of his total self; nothing less than this would provide an adequate image of his own prototype. This problem is, of course, the problem that Shelley himself faced when he decided to re-direct his powers from that of a moral reformer, in the Godwinian

sense, to that of a poet. Mary Shelley's comment is here significant:

> Shelley possessed two remarkable qualities of intellect - a brilliant imagination, and a logical exactness of reason. His inclinations led him (he fancied) almost alike to poetry and metaphysical discussions. I say "he fancied," because I believe the former would have gained mastery even had he struggled against it. However, he said that he deliberated at one time whether he should dedicate himself to poetry or metaphysics; and resolving the former, he educated himself for it, discarding in a great measure his philosophical pursuits, and engaging himself in the study of the poets of Greece, Italy and England. To these may be added a constant perusal of portions of the Old Testament - the Psalms, the Book of Job, the Prophet Isaiah, and others, the sublime poetry of which filled him with delight.[19]

Mary Shelley's account of Shelley's literary education for his vocation as a poet is significant because it is precisely this education that the youth in Alastor, whom Shelley calls a poet, lacks. "As allegorical of one of the most interesting situations of the human mind",[20] the poem presents, therefore, the picture of Shelley still wandering between the worlds of reason and imagination.

To suggest, as Mary Shelley does, that Shelley's problem was whether to "dedicate himself to poetry or metaphysics" is misleading. Shelley was, in essence, a metaphysical poet; his whole defence of poetry rested on the grounds that "it is at once the centre and circumference of knowledge; it is that which comprehends all science, and that to which all science must be referred."[21] Shelley's problem, therefore, was to relate man's knowledge of

the universe to his own internal nature; to turn, that is, his perception of its order from an abstract account of causal relationships into a visionary form that imaged forth the whole of man's psychic nature. The epipsyche must be, at one and the same time, both the counterpart of his own prototype and the image of the animating spirit which governs nature. The psyche-epipsyche theme requires for its realization the view of man's internal nature as the microcosm of the macrocosm.

This imaginative unity of man and the cosmos, lacking in Alastor, is realized in the Epipsychidion. In some literal sense, the poem is about Shelley's love for "the noble and unfortunate lady, Emilia V ----"[22] whom, in 1820, Shelley discovered existing as a virtual prisoner in the convent of St. Anna at Pisa. He addresses her in the opening lines:

> Poor captive bird! who, from thy narrow cage,
> Pourest such music, that it might assuage
> The rugged hearts of those who prisoned thee,
> Were they not deaf to all sweet melody;
> This song shall be thy rose: its petals pale
> Are dead, indeed, my adored Nightingale!
> But soft and fragrant is the faded blossom,
> And it has no thorn left to wound thy bosom.
> (5-12.)

In the anagogical sense, however, the poem is about the "awful shadow of some unseen power" which is the source of all that is beautiful on earth. Thus having addressed her in the literal sense as a "poor captive bird", he quickly

goes on to address her in the anagogical sense:

> Seraph of Heaven! too gentle to be human,
> Veiling beneath that radiant form of Woman
> All that is insupportable in thee
> Of light, and love, and immortality!
> Sweet Benediction in the eternal Curse!
> Veiled Glory of this lampless Universe!
> (21-26.)

It is in this anagogical sense that Shelley wished the poem to be understood. "The Epipschydion [sic] ", he says in a letter to John Gisborne (October 22, 1821), "is a mystery - As to real flesh and blood, you know that I do not deal in those articles; you might as well go to a gin shop for a leg of mutton, as expect anything human or earthly from me."[23] In spite of the facetious tone, Shelley meant what he said. Concerning its publication, he writes to Charles Ollier (February 16, 1821):

> It is to be published simply for the esoteric few. . . . My wish with respect to it is, that it should be printed immediately in the simplest form, and merely one hundred copies: those who are capable of judging and feeling rightly with respect to a composition of so abstruse an nature, certainly do not arrive at that number - among those, at least, who would ever be excited to read an obscure and anonymous production; and it would give me no pleasure that the vulgar should read it.[24]

Between 1815 and 1821 Shelley's conception of the psyche-epipsyche relationship underwent no significant change. The belief, expressed in the Preface to Alastor, that "the intellectual faculties, the imagination, the functions of the sense, have their respective requisitions on the sympathy of corresponding powers in other human beings"

is identical with the belief expressed in A Discourse On the Manners of the Ancients, which he wrote with reference to Plato's Symposium. "Man", he says in this essay,

> is in his wildest state a social being: a certain degree of civilisation and refinement ever produces the want of sympathies still more intimate and complete; and the gratification of the senses is no longer all that is sought in sexual connexion. It soon becomes a very small part of that profound and complicated sentiment, which we call love, which is rather the universal thirst for a communion not merely of the senses, but of our whole nature, intellectual, imaginative and sensitive; and which, when individualised, becomes an imperious necessity, only to be satisfied by a complete or partial, actual or supposed, fulfilment of its claims.[25]

The difference, then, between the two poems is not in the conception of love which underlies them, but in the imaginative enlargement of that conception. The intellectual faculties embrace a conception of the order of the universe; the imagination fuses that conception with man's internal nature; the senses provide the imagery drawn from the observation of the forms of nature which, in conjunction with the imagination, act as symbols of mental action. Thus, in speaking of the satisfaction of the senses through sexual connexion, Shelley says, in his Discourse on the Manners of the Ancients, that it "serves, from its obvious and external nature, as a kind of type or expression of the rest, a common basis, an acknowledged and visible link."[26]

The realization of the arrested vision of Alastor in the Epipsychidion, then, is in part the result of Shelley's discovery of the nature of symbolism. In Alastor, the

youth's failure to find his epipsyche is the result of not really understanding its nature. What the poet is in search of is not, in the literal sense, a woman whose nature corresponds to his own and therefore completes it: he is in search of a symbol in terms of which the total vision of himself may be verbalized in poetry. And this is precisely where Plato helped him.

In the Symposium, the epipsyche for which man searches is not to be found in another person. The union which under the guidance of Eros he seeks is re-union with the Forms. What man loves is not the object so much as the beauty revealed in the object. And the beauty revealed in the object is, in reality, the beauty revealed in all objects. Moving, therefore, from the beauty in one object to the beauty revealed in all objects, he arrives at the notion of undifferentiated Beauty, i.e., Beauty in itself to which Shelley gives the name Intellectual Beauty.

In Alastor, the youth fails to fuse the particular and the universal. In sleep he dreams of a veiled maiden who embraces him for an instant until night "involved and swallowed up the vision"(189). When he awakens, the vision has fled. This vision, says Shelley, had been granted to the youth by the "spirit of sweet human love" (203). Because it is "human love" he is unable to identify the beauty of the maiden with the beauty of nature in which he is

utterly immersed. Unable to bring the two together through the fusing power of imagination he becomes the victim of solitude; i.e., he is separated from the beauteous forms of nature that surround him. And it is because of this solitude, this separation both from nature and man, that "he descends to an untimely grave."[27]

In the Epipsychidion, on the other hand, Shelley is not talking about a vision granted to him by the "spirit of sweet human love". Indeed, if the poem is read in the manner which Shelley wished it to be read, he is not really talking about "sweet human love" at all. From his reading of the Symposium he had come to realize that human love is but the symbol of man's desire for a higher form of union. In Dante's Paradiso, with which he became acquainted late in 1817, and the Vita Nuova, which he read while the Epipsychidion was being composed, he could see the poetic realization of Plato's view of Eros. And in addition to Dante's poems, he was familiar with the theory of poetry upon which they were based. In 1820 he translated a canzone from the Convito. In the second book of the Convito, Dante explains the four levels (literal, allegorical, moral and anagogical) on which a work of literary art ought to be understood. Shelley was obviously familiar with this conception; his remarks on Dante in A Defense of Poetry strongly suggests that he read him in this light. Finally,

in the last stanza of the canzone, which Shelley translated, Dante, having in mind the anagogical level of his poem, says:

> My song, I fear that thou wilt find but few
> Who fitly shall conceive thy reasoning -
> Of such hard matter dost thou entertain.
> Whence, if by misadventure chance should bring
> Thee to base company, as chance may do,
> Quite unaware of what thou dost contain,
> I prithee comfort thy sweet self again,
> My last delight: tell them that they are dull,
> And bid them own that thou art beautiful.
> (52-60.)

The very strong resemblance between this stanza and Shelley's remarks to Ollier on requesting that only a hundred copies of his poem be published show how closely he modelled his Epipsychidion on Dante's own vision. Indeed, it may not be going too far to suggest that Shelley's conception of the hidden level of meaning in all visionary poetry is, to a great extent, the result of Dante's influence.

Mary Shelley, then, is quite wrong when she says of Alastor that "none of Shelley's poems is more characteristic than this."[28] Alastor was written before Shelley had grasped what was for him the essential nature of poetry. In the Preface to The Revolt of Islam, he says that the essential characteristic of a poet lies not so much in what he has read, seen or experienced (although these are important), but in "the power of awakening in others sensations like those which animate my own bosom".[29] This is precisely

the power which the poet in Alastor lacks. Unlike Laon, whose thoughts were "invested with the light/ Of language" to which "all bosoms made reply/ On which its lustre streamed"(II, 141-143), the poet in Alastor lived, sang and died in solitude.

And the reason is not simply to be put down to Mary Godwin, in spite of what Shelley says about her in the dedication stanzas to The Revolt of Islam. Between Alastor and The Revolt of Islam, Shelley dedicated himself to poetry. That dedication, if the Hymn to Intellectual Beauty can - as it should - be taken seriously, was the result of his discovery not of Mary Godwin's beauty so much as his awakening to Intellectual Beauty. It is the shadow of that universal form of Beauty that fell upon him. And when he came to speak of his relationship to Mary in the dedication stanzas to The Revolt of Islam, he says that they are together "like lamps into the world's tempestuous night"(123). This is the image with which he addresses Emilia Viviani: "Veiled Glory of this lampless Universe" (22)!

On the basis of this contrast between the two poems it is possible to define more adequately what is involved in the psyche-epipsyche theme. It is the "metaphysical anatomy" of the sexual relationship. The desire for union between the male and female is "a kind or type" of the larger cosmic harmony. That which animates and sustains

the universal order is that which unites the male and female. The poet, through the fusing power of his imagination, unites the two. His own internal nature, viewed as an ideal prototype, is a miniature of the cosmic order. This image, the "being within our being"[30], acts as a model in terms of which he creates out of the multitude of impressions to which he is peculiarly sensitive its own counterpart. This counterpart is the epipsyche. Like the prototype acting as the model for its creation, it is an archetypal image that unites within itself the sensitive, intellectual and imaginative aspects of man. In terms of the senses, it is a sensuous image; in terms of the senses and the intellect, it is a conceptual image (personification) of the order of the universe; in terms of the senses, the intellect and the imagination, it is a vision (symbol) of the universe transfigured by love.

On the basis of this hierarchy of man's "inner faculties" Shelley, in A Defense of Poetry, evaluates poetry, and examines the waxing and waning of the creative process in the history of the western world. Using as a standard of perfection the writings of Homer and Sophocles, he says:

> Their superiority over these succeeding writers consists in the presence of those thoughts which belong to the inner faculties of our natures, not in the absence of those which are connected with the external: their incomparable perfection consists in a harmony of the union of all.[31]

Their works, in other words, are a complete revelation of the divinity in man, because they have harmonized into an

ideal unity all the faculties of man's nature. The "succeeding writers" to which he refers are the erotic or bucolic poets. Their imperfection, he says, consists not in what they have, but in what they have not. What they have is a sensibility to pleasure, passion and natural scenery.[32] What they have not is the imaginative power to transfigure, as it were, this sensitivity into a vision of the divinity in man. Their poetry, therefore, should be considered "simply as fragments and isolated portions"[32] within the larger imaginative vision of such poets as Homer and Sophocles. The lowest form of poetry is that in which all sensibility to pleasure is destroyed. The closest approximation to this ultimate corruption belongs to the decadence of Syracuse and Alexandria, on the one hand, and the period following the Restoration, on the other. Of these periods of decadence, Shelley says:

> Obscenity, which is ever blasphemy against the divine beauty in life, becomes, from the very veil which it assumes, more active if less disgusting: it is a monster for which the corruption of society for ever brings forth new food, which it devours in secret.[33]

Shelley's analysis of the three levels of poetry as revealed in their declining order within a given cycle of civilization provides a key to the understanding of Shelley's own account of his "idealized history"[34] in the central section of the <u>Epipsychidion</u>. What Shelley here describes is the gradual awakening of his inner faculties until the

prototype that exists in his mind is fully realized in the creation of its image. The process which he presents in some detail in the Epipsychidion, he describes very succinctly in A Discourse on the Manners of the Ancients.

> This object, or its archetype, forever exists in the mind, which selects among those who resemble it, that which most resembles it; and instinctively fills up the interstices of the imperfect image, in the same manner as the imagination moulds and completes the shapes in clouds, or in the fire, into the resemblances of whatever form, animal, building, &c., happens to be present to it.[35]

This process of filling up "the interstices of the imperfect image" until it assumes the shape of its archetype which "forever exists in the mind" is the awakening of his inner faculties until the imaginative harmony is realized.

In this ideal history Shelley uses the sun, moon and comet as symbols of man's faculties. The sun, the ultimate source of illumination on earth, is the imagination. What the sun is to the external world, the imagination is to the internal world. The moon, which borrows its light from the sun, is the intellectual faculty, reason. In his discussion of imagination and reason in A Defense of Poetry, Shelley makes it clear that reason is the reflection of the imagination: "Reason is to imagination as the instrument to the agent, as the body to the spirit, as the shadow to the substance."[36] The comet is the appetitive nature, the principle of evil in The Revolt of Islam, that takes over when both imagination and reason are temporarily

eclipsed. These three symbols identify, more or less, the three types of poetry which Shelley describes in A Defense of Poetry. In a letter composed relative to Peacock's Four Ages of Poetry, to which Shelley's Defense is an answer, he says of Peacock's point of view:

> He would extinguish Imagination which is the Sun of life, and grope his way by the cold and uncertain and borrowed light of that moon which he calls Reason, stumbling over the interlunar chasms of time where she deserts us, and [like] an owl, rather than an eagle, stare with dazzled eyes on the watery orb which is the Queen of his pale Heaven.[37]

Bearing in mind the nature of Shelley's symbols, it is now possible to examine Shelley's account of his own inner growth as a poet in the Epipsychidion and compare that account to its parallel in Alastor.

The middle section of the Epipsychidion begins with an account of that "being whom my spirit oft/ Met on its visioned wanderings" (191-192). This vision, as he presents it, is felt rather than imaged; "in the clear golden prime of my youth's dawn" (193) it had, as yet, assumed no visual shape. Its presence, however, is felt on "enchanted mountains"(194), in "the caves/ Of divine sleep"(194-195), in "the whispering woods" (201), in "the singing of summer-birds" (208), in "the words/ Of antique verse and high romance" (209-210), and "in that best philosophy" (213). Her spirit was "the harmony of truth" (216) that fused all his experience into a single vision which had yet to as-

sume the form of its own divinity.

Shelley then goes on to describe his efforts to embody this "harmony of truth" in an adequate symbol. His first effort, springing as it did "from the caverns of my dreamy youth" (217), was a failure. Shelley's description of the failure must be quoted at length for it provides a valued insight into the nature of the youth's failure in Alastor:

> Then, from the caverns of my dreamy youth
> I sprang, as one sandalled with plumes of fire,
> And towards the loadstar of my one desire,
> I flitted, like a dizzy moth, whose flight
> Is as a dead leaf's in the owlet light,
> When it would seek in Hesper's setting sphere
> A radiant death, a fiery sepulchre,
> As if it were a lamp of earthly flame. -
> But She, whom prayers or tears then could not tame,
> Past, like a God throned on a winged planet,
> Whose burning plumes to tenfold swiftness fan it,
> Into the dreary cone of our life's shade;
> And as a man with mighty loss dismayed,
> I would have followed, though the grave between
> Yawned like a gulf whose spectres are unseen:
> When a voice said: - "O Thou of hearts the weakest,
> The phantom is beside thee whom thou seekest."
> Then I - "Where?" - the world's echo answered "where!"
> And in that silence, and in my despair,
> I questioned every tongueless wind that flew
> Over my tower of mourning, if it knew
> Whither 'twas fled, this soul out of my soul;
> And murmured names and spells which have controul
> Over the sightless tyrants of our fate;
> But neither prayer nor verse could dissipate
> The night which closed on her; nor uncreate
> That world within this Chaos, mine and me,
> Of which she was the veiled Divinity,
> The world I say of thoughts that worshipped her:
> And therefore I went forth, with hope and fear
> And every gentle passion sick to death,
> Feeding my course with expectation's breath,
> Into the wintry forest of our life;
> And struggling through its error with vain strife,

And stumbling in my weakness and my haste,
And half bewildered by new forms, I past
Seeking among those untaught foresters
If I could find one form resembling hers,
In which she might have masked herself from me.
There, - One, whose voice was venomed melody
Sate by a well, under blue night-shade bowers;
The breath of her false mouth was like faint flowers,
Her touch was as electric poison, - flame
Out of her looks into my vitals came,
And from her living cheeks and bosom flew
A killing air, which pierced like honey-dew
Into the core of my green heart, and lay
Upon its leaves; until, as hair grown gray
O'er a young brow, they hid its unblown prime
With ruins of unseasonable time.
(217-266.)

What Shelley presents here embraces, in miniature, the whole of Alastor. "The Poet", Shelley says in his Preface to Alastor, "is represented as uniting these requisitions, and attaching them to a single image. He seeks in vain for a prototype of his conception. Blasted by disappointment, he descends to an untimely grave."[38]

Viewed within the larger symbolic pattern of the Epipsychidion, the picture of the poet searching in the midst of chaos for his epipsyche, his "overy gentle passion sick to death", is simply the upsurge of the appetitive soul in youth before it is brought under the discipline of the reason and imagination. It is his own youthful passion under the dominion of the fierce Comet

Who drew the heart of this frail Universe
Toward thine own; till, wreckt in that convulsion,
Alternating attraction and repulsion,
Thine went astray, and that was rent in twain.
(369-372.)

From his first failure, Shelley goes on in the Epipsychidion, he was delivered by a second vision:

> When, like a noon-day dawn, there shone again
> Deliverance. One stood on my path who seemed
> As like the glorious shape which I had dreamed,
> As is the Moon, whose changes ever run
> Into themselves, to the eternal Sun;
> The cold chaste Moon, the Queen of Heaven's bright isles,
> Who makes all beautiful on which she smiles,
> That wandering shrine of soft yet icy flame
> Which ever is transformed, yet still the same,
> And warms not but illumines. Young and fair
> As the descended Spirit of that sphere,
> She hid me, as the Moon may hide the night
> From its own darkness, until all was bright
> Between the Heaven and Earth of my calm mind,
> And, as a cloud charioted by the wind,
> She led me to a cave in that wild place,
> And sate beside me, with her downward face
> Illumining my slumbers, like the Moon
> Waxing and waning o'er Endymion.
> (276-294.)

Interpreted in the light of his symbolism, Shelley here describes the rescuing of his soul from the false imaginings of his appetitive soul by Reason. Reason, however, is cold and chaste; it "warms not but illumines." Of this middle state - a state which Shelley no doubt experienced not only in the actual composition of a poem, but also in that early period in which he was uncertain whether to continue as a "votary of Reason" or become a poet - Shelley writes in a letter to Ollier (January 20, 1821): "I could be content either with the Hell or the Paradise of poetry; but the torments of its purgatory vex me, without exciting my power sufficiently to put an end to the vexation."[39]

Since the waxing moon must inevitably wane, the power of reason soon goes temporarily dark and the soul is hurled back into that Hell - the victim of its appetitive nature - from which Reason had rescued it.

> What storms then shook the ocean of my sleep,
> Plotting that Moon, whose pale and waning lips
> Then shrank as in the sickness of eclipse;-
> And how my soul was as a lampless sea,
> And who was then its Tempest; and when She,
> The Planet of that hour was quenched, what frost
> Crept o'er those waters, till from coast to coast
> The moving billows of my being fell
> Into a death of ice, immoveable.
> (308-316.)

It is in this condition that the poet in Alastor sinks, like the moon, to "an untimely grave." The similarity between Shelley's account of the poet's death in Alastor to the above passage is worth noting:

> . . . his last sight
> Was the great moon, which o'er the western line
> Of the wide world her mighty horn suspended,
> With whose dun beams inwoven darkness seemed
> To mingle. Now upon the jagged hills
> It rests, and still as the divided frame
> Of the vast meteor sunk, the Poet's blood,
> That ever beat in mystic sympathy
> With nature's ebb and flow, grew feebler still:
> And when two lessening points of light alone
> Gleamed through the darkness, the alternate gasp
> Of his faint respiration scarce did stir
> The stagnant night: - till the minutest ray
> Was quenched, the pulse yet lingered in his heart.
> It paused - it fluttered. But when heaven remained
> Utterly black, the murky shades involved
> An image, silent, cold, and motionless,
> As their own voiceless earth and vacant air.
> Even as a vapour fed with golden beams
> That ministered on sunlight, ere the west
> Eclipses it, was now that wondrous frame.
> (645-665.)

These last two lines, in which the poet is described

as a vapour shot through by beams of sunlight, suggests that he died with his imagination (the sun) still veiled. The poet's creative powers failed to ignite. The poet in the opening passages of Alastor invokes Necessity, "Mother of this unfathomable world"(18). He speaks, in lines that parallel the account of the poet's youthful quest in the Hymn to Intellectual Beauty, of his efforts to unveil "thine inmost sanctuary" (38). Those efforts have, in the past, granted him only faint intimations. Now, once again and in verse, he waits upon its breath.

> . . . In lone and silent hours,
> When night makes a weird sound of its own stillness,
> Like an inspired and desperate alchymist
> Staking his very life on some dark hope,
> Have I mixed awful talk and asking looks
> With my most innocent love, until strange tears
> Uniting with those breathless kisses, made
> Such magic as compels the charmed night
> To render up thy charge: . . . and, though ne'er yet
> Thou hast unveil'd thy inmost sanctuary;
> Enough from incommunicable dream,
> And twilight phantasms, and deep noonday thought,
> Has shone within me, that serenely now
> And moveless, as a long-forgotten lyre
> Suspended in the solitary dome
> Of some mysterious and deserted fane,
> I wait thy breath, Great Parent, that my strain
> May modulate with murmurs of the air,
> And motions of the forests and the sea,
> And voice of living beings, and woven hymns
> Of night and day, and the deep heart of man.
> (29-49.)

The world of the imagination, however, he does not find, and in his failure he conceives of it as an illusion that has pursued him to his death. The world of the "inspired and desperate alchymist" of which he speaks is the creative

imagination, the "secret alchemy" which "turns to potable gold the poisonous waters which move from death through life".[40] This vision of the nature of poetry, the expression of his own inner discovery which shaped his apocalyptic vision, stands out in marked contrast to the poet's failure in Alastor.

> O, for Medea's wondrous alchemy,
> Which wheresoe'er it fell made the earth gleam
> With bright flowers, and the wintry boughs exhale
> From verbal blossoms fresh fragrance! O, that God,
> Profuse of poisons, would concede the chalice
> Which but one living man has drained, who now,
> Vessel of deathless wrath, a slave that feels
> No proud exemption in the blighting curse
> He bears, over the world wanders for ever,
> Lone in incarnate death! O, that the dream
> Of dark magician in his visioned cave,
> Raking the cinders of a crucible
> For life and power, even when his feeble hand
> Shakes in its last decay, were the true law
> Of this so lovely world!
>
> (672-686.)

The third vision granted to the poet in the Epipsychidion "redeems from decay the visitations of the divinity in Man."[41] It redeems, that is, the arrested vision of Alastor. The poet has found

> . . . Medea's wondrous alchemy
> Which wheresoe'er it fell made the earth gleam
> With bright flowers, and the wintry boughs exhale
> From verbal blossoms fresh fragrance!

Here is the poet's description of the experience:

> At length, into the obscure Forest came
> The Vision I had sought through grief and shame.
> Athwart that wintry wilderness of thorns
> Flashed from her motion splendour like the Morn's,
> And from her presence life was radiated
> Through the grey earth and branches bare and dead;

So that her way was paved, and roofed above
With flowers as soft as thoughts of budding love;
And music from her respiration spread
Like light, - all other sounds were penetrated
By the small, still, sweet spirit of that sound,
So that the savage winds hung mute around;
And odours warm and fresh fell from her hair
Dissolving the dull cold in the frore air;
Soft as an Incarnation of the Sun,
When light is changed to love, this glorious One
Floated into the cavern where I lay,
And called my Spirit.
(321-338.)

Once the imagination assumes its proper place in the hierarchy of man's faculties, the universe perceived by those faculties is the outward vision of the divinity within man. In a rather extraordinary passage at the conclusion of the second section of the poem, therefore, the inner and the outer world become one through the use of the sun, moon and comet symbolism. The "Twin Spheres of light who rule this passive earth" (345) are, when viewed through the eye of the imagination, the sun and moon that rule "this world of love, this <u>me</u>" (346). In the lines that immediately follow "this passive earth" and "this me" become one, so that the flowering of the earth and the imagination are metaphorically equated:

Twin Spheres of light who rule this passive Earth,
This world of love, this <u>me</u>; and into birth
Awaken all its fruits and flowers, and dart
Magnetic might into its central heart.
(345-348.)

And the senses, which, when released from the shaping power of the imagination and the control of reason, create both an inner and an outer chaos, fall into their proper place

in the inner scheme of things.

> Thou too, O Comet beautiful and fierce,
> . . . . . .
> Oh, float into our azure heaven again!
> Be there love's folding-star at thy return;
> The living Sun will feed thee from its urn
> Of golden fire; the Moon will veil her horn
> In thy last smiles.
>
> (368-378.)

The awakening of Shelley's imaginative power, with its attendant harmonious structuring of his faculties that removes "the veil of familiarity" and reveals the entire universe in an apocalyptic light, provides the basis for a more complete understanding of the love duet between the earth and the moon in the last act of Prometheus Unbound. It may now be re-examined in the light of the Epipsychidion. The recreated earth is "this world of love" ruled by the "Twin Spheres of light", reason and imagination. During the reign of Jupiter, the imagination was "veiled" and reason and the passions, like the dark night of Alastor and Epipsychidion, preyed upon each other reducing the inner and outer world to chaos. With the unveiling of the imagination (the unbinding of Prometheus), however, reason and the passions fell into place under the controlling spirit of the imagination. Thus, the earth transfigured by love or imaginative vision (the sun) made its peace with the moon (reason) so that the moon, like "an insatiate bride" revolves around it in perpetual ecstasy. The cosmic harmony which he describes is a symbol of the inner harmony of re-born

humanity.

> Thou art speeding round the sun,
> Brightest world of many a one;
> Green and azure sphere which shinest
> With a light which is divinest
> Among all the lamps of Heaven
> To whom life and light is given;
> I, thy crystal paramour,
> Born beside thee by a power
> Like the polar Paradise,
> Magnet-like of lover's eyes;
> I, a most enamoured maiden,
> Whose weak brain is overladen
> With the pleasure of her love,
> Maniac-like around thee move
> Gazing, an insatiate bride,
> On thy form from every side.
> (457-472.)

In reply to the moon's song of joy, the earth pays tribute to its regulating power:

> Oh, gentle Moon, the voice of thy delight
> Falls on me like thy clear and tender light
> Soothing the seaman, borne the summer night
> Through isles for ever calm;
> Oh, gentle Moon, thy crystal accents pierce
> The caverns of my pride's deep universe,
> Charming the tiger joy, whose tramplings fierce
> Made wounds which need thy balm.
> (495-502.)

The restorative and regulating power of reason Shelley recognized as necessary to man, so long, of course, as it does not usurp imagination's throne "curtained within the invisible nature of man."[42] "But in the intervals of inspiration," he says in his Defense of Poetry,"and they may be frequent without being durable, a Poet becomes a man , and is abandoned to the sudden reflux of the influences under which others habitually live."[43] And it is precisely

at this point that reason performs its regulating function. As the moon reflects the light of the sun, so reason, when inspiration declines, can reflect the light of imagination, and guide the poet when he is "abandoned to the sudden influx of the influences under which others habitually live." The poet during such intervals, he says, will avoid pain and pursue pleasure, will, that is, continue to reflect by means of his reason, that inner harmony which is achieved in the act of creation. It is in this sense that the earth expresses in the above passage its gratitude to the moon.

By drawing into closer focus the psyche-epipsyche theme in Prometheus Unbound, therefore, Shelley has further clarified the erotic nature of his apocalyptic vision . In this sense the Epipsychidion completes the circle around his own "proper Paradise, which pain, and sorrow, and evil dare not overleap."[44] The wheel has come full circle and the poet, like Plato's virtuous man who had completed the cycle of incarnation, was ready to leave the world of images and return to the One, the proper home of his prototype.

Chapter 9

ADONAIS

The mythological framework of Adonais derives, superficially at least, from Bion's Lament for Adonis. Upon this mythological framework Shelley superimposed a very different pattern from that revealed in Bion's poem. Indeed, when Shelley's Adonais is compared with Bion's poem it becomes evident that Shelley has transfigured it and turned the lament by Aphrodite over the corpse of Adonis into a glorious hymn celebrating the re-birth of Adonais. Where Bion laments the separation of Aphrodite and Adonis through the descent of Adonis into Hades, Shelley celebrates the re-union of Adonais and Urania. To account for the profound difference in the two poems, it is necessary to examine in some detail the way in which Shelley has imposed upon the Adonis myth the idealism of his mature vision as revealed in Prometheus Unbound and the Epipsychidion. In doing this, however, Shelley has achieved something more than simply a recreation of the vision of these two poems. And it is precisely that something more that led Shelley to

consider Adonais the "least imperfect"[1] of all his poems.

Shelley's view of Bion's Lament for Adonis can be inferred from his view of the bucolic poets expressed in his Defense of Poetry. By and large, he says, their poetry was "connected with the corruption of their age."[2] At the same time, they had not broken with the "sacred links of that chain"[3] held together by the magnetic force of the greatest Greek poets. While they lacked the imaginative power of these great minds, their "sensibility to pleasure, passion, and natural scenery" [4] had not been extinguished. In reading Bion's Lament, therefore, Shelley must have been struck by its passion and natural beauty while, at the same time, he must have been somewhat repelled by its lack of imaginative force,which would have, in the hands of a greater poet, transmuted this passion and this beauty into a vision of the ideal. "Those who are more finely organized, or born in a happier age," he goes on, "may recognize them as episodes to that great poem, which all poets, like the co-operating thoughts of one great mind, have built up since the beginning of the world."[5]

At the end of his Defense, Shelley makes it quite clear that he is one of those "born in a happier age". And his account of his own inner development in the Epipsychidion makes it equally clear that he was one of "those who are more finely organized". What therefore he attempts in

Adonais is to enlarge the vision of Bion so that what emerges is not simply a fragment or an isolated portion, but the total vision of that "great poem, which all poets, like the co-operating thoughts of one great mind, have built up since the beginning of the world." That Shelley felt himself equal to the task is evident not alone from the inner discoveries he had made during the course of his own poetic development but also from his comprehension of the nature of that one poem, the examination of which is the underlying theme of A Defense of Poetry.

The myth of Adonis, as presented in Greek literature (which was, of course, Shelley's source), concerns itself with the most characteristic of mythical themes, that of the dying and rising god.[6] In the Greek version of the myth, Adonis is a comely youth beloved by Aphrodite. In his infancy, Aphrodite hid him in a chest which she entrusted to Proserpine, the Queen of Hades. When Proserpine opened the chest and gazed upon the beauty of the infant, she was so enamoured of what she saw that she refused to return him to Aphrodite. The dispute between the two goddesses as to who should possess the child was finally decided by Zeus, who decreed that he should abide with Proserpine for one part of the year and with Aphrodite for the other part.

The joint possession of Adonis by Proserpine and Aphrodite is dramatized in the myth in the slaying of Adonis

by Ares, his jealous rival, in the form of a wild boar. From the blood of Adonis, mixed with the tears of Aphrodite, emerged the rich profusion of vegetable life so that his death carried within it the seed of new life. His death and return to Proserpine contained the promise of his resurrection and re-union with Aphrodite.

In Bion's Lament for Adonis all the elements of the myth are present. At the death of Adonis, Aphrodite laments that he must return to Persephone (or Proserpine): "Take thou my husband, Persephone, for thou art mightier far than I, and all that is fair comes down to thee; while I am hapless utterly, a prey to sorrow unassuaged, and weep for my Adonis who is dead, and I fear thee"(52-56). From her tears mixed with Adonis's blood flowers come forth: "As fast from the Paphian flow tears as from Adonis blood, and both on the ground are turned to flowers; of the blood are roses born, and of the tears anemones" (63-65). And the cyclic recurrence of death and resurrection is implied in the last lines: "Cease thy laments today, Cytherea; stay thy dirges. Again must thou lament, again must thou weep another year" (97-98).

Bion, it can be seen, is writing about the death of Adonis. The death of Adonis, however, cannot be viewed apart from his resurrection, for the latter is implicit in the former. In this obvious sense, the poem is but a frag-

ment or episode of the total myth. The vision of the poem is, therefore, an arrested one and stands in relation to Shelley's treatment of the myth as Alastor stands in relation to the Epipsychidion.

The parallel is worth comment. Shelley's poetry, viewed as a whole, presents a single unfolding vision of which the earlier poems are but episodes or fragments. What he was concerned to do was so to clarify that vision that he could present it within the imaginative framework of a single poem. In Prometheus Unbound there are still some loose threads that are not totally integrated into the apocalyptic vision. Demogorgon remains a separate principle imposing limits upon it. The Epipsychidion, while completing the circle, shows, as it were, an unsteady hand. The rich profusion of images with which he attempts to describe the epipsyche suggests a certain tentativeness on Shelley's part. Shelley, as it were, had not yet fully awakened from the "dream of life" (344), had not yet gained that final perspective which comes when the "dome of many-coloured glass" (462) has been smashed and the "white radiance of Eternity" (464) is revealed in the fulness of its splendour. His real epipsyche, as distinct from the image of it, is that "white radiance." To awaken to it, of course, is the annihilation of vision; the experience of that"white radiance" is blinding in the fullest sense of

the word. Yet, within the limits of poetic vision, it may be said that Urania in Adonais is the closest approximation of that "white radiance" at which Shelley could arrive and yet remain a poet. In this fact alone lies much of the poem's inner perfection. It was not so much Keats's epitaph that he was writing as his own. Shelley is creating not so much a vision of life as a vision of death. And in that vision is the something more, mentioned in the opening paragraph of this chapter.

Shelley's belief that the creative process begins "with the interpenetration of a diviner nature through our own"[7] led him to consider the Muse as the actual author of the best and highest poetry. Milton's statement, for example, that the Muse "dictated" to him his "unpremeditated song"[8] he accepted in a thoroughly literal sense. Milton's being was, as it were, invaded by a "diviner nature" so that what he wrote, under its influence, had nothing to do with his own will, belonging as it did to a realm over and above consciousness. The Muse that "dictated" Keats's poetry,[9] Shelley points out in Adonais, is Urania, the same Muse that Milton invokes in the proem to the seventh book of Paradise Lost when he is confronted with the task of describing the creation. And, at the end of Adonais, it is the "breath", (487) of Urania that descends on Shelley and calls him to "the abode where the Eternal are" (495), just

as her"breath" had descended on Keats and called him. Urania, the goddess of astronomy whose planet is Venus, is "the soul of Adonais" (494). Keats's psyche has merged with his epipsyche and both have disappeared beyond "the inmost veil of Heaven" (493). Thus, when the "breath whose might I have invoked in song" (487) descends on Shelley and he is "born darkly, fearfully, afar" (492), it is "the soul of Adonais" which, "like a star,/ Beacons from the abode where the Eternal are."

What Shelley is suggesting in this stanza is an experience beyond the range of vision, the mergence of his own creative power with the "white radiance of Eternity", his own absorption into the ultimate source from which all life emanates. Toward this smashing of the "dome of many-coloured glass" the last stanzas of the poem inevitably move. To mourn for Adonais is wrong; it shows an ignorance both of his and one's own inner reality. To face that inner reality, gradually awakened as hope kindles hope, is to be lured to the brink of eternity. Standing upon that ultimate precipice - the final veil that separates the dream of life from the reality of death - there remains to be accomplished only the final plunge into the One. The poem ends with Shelley standing upon such a precipice.

> Who mourns for Adonais? Oh, come forth,
> Fond wretch! and know thyself and him aright.
> Clasp with thy panting soul the pendulous Earth;
> As from a centre, dart thy spirit's light

Beyond all worlds, until its spacious might
Satiate the void circumference: then shrink
Even to a point within our day and night;
And keep thy heart light lest it make thee sink
When hope has kindled hope, and lured thee to the brink.
(415-423.)

The problem, viewed in metaphysical terms, with which Shelley was concerned as a poet was the relationship between the world of Being and the world of Becoming. At the outset of his career as a moral reformer, Shelley, following Godwin and the whole philosophy of the Enlightenment, believed in progress and perfectibility through which the process of Becoming would ultimately be absorbed into Being. His reading of Plato, however, changed his mind. In Plato's account of the limitations imposed upon the Demi-urge by virtue of the material with which he must work, he saw that a real distinction must be drawn between that which is shaped and the model upon which it is based. The Platonic creation myth, in turn, he understood as the archetype of the creative process at work within the poet. Thus he says in his Defense of Poetry that "the most glorious poetry that has ever been communicated to the world is probably a feeble shadow of the original conceptions of the Poet."[10] And the reason that it is "a feeble shadow" is because of the material with which the poet must work. He must work with the mind of man in its fallen condition, with "the curse which binds us to be subjected to the accident of surrounding impressions."[11] The creative imagination, the "divinity in

Man"[12] can, in the moments of divine madness, defeat that curse, and thus redeem from decay the visitations of that divinity. But decay, like the death of Adonais, is the law of life and whether one considers life as arising out of decay or decay as arising out of life, man in this world is the victim of the cyclic round of nature.

So long as Shelley could keep alive within him his "passion for reforming the world"[13] the Promethean aspect of his apocalyptic vision fired him to continue as a poet. He could view, that is, the cyclic round of nature, the mythical vision of a dying and rising god, as a message of hope: "If Winter comes, can Spring be far behind?"[14] By 1821, however, Shelley's Promethean power was nearly exhausted. He attempted in Hellas (completed in October, 1821) to write one more Promethean poem. The cause of Greek freedom was, of course, of enormous significance to Shelley, believing as he did that "we are all Greeks."[15] The poem, however, he considered "a mere improvise."[16] Internally, it reveals a divided allegiance. On the one hand, he proclaims that

> The world's great age begins anew,
> The golden years return,
> The earth doth like a snake renew
> Her winter weeds outworn:
> Heaven smiles, and faiths and empires gleam,
> Like wrecks of a dissolving dream.
> (1060-1065.)

On the other hand, he proclaims that the whole vision of cyclic renewal out of which a "brighter Hellas" must arise is but a dream.

But look on that which cannot change - the One
The unborn and the undying. Earth and ocean,
Space, and the isles of life or light that gem
The sapphire floods of interstellar air,
This firmament pavilioned upon chaos,
With all its cressets of immortal fire,
Whose outwall, bastioned impregnably
Against the escape of boldest thoughts, repels them
As Calpe the Atlantic clouds - this Whole
Of suns, and worlds, and men, and beasts, and flowers,
With all the silent or tempestuous workings
By which they have been, are, or cease to be,
Is but a vision; - all that it inherits
Are motes of a sick eye, bubbles, and dreams;
Thought is its cradle and its grave, nor less
The future and the past are idle shadows
Of thought's eternal flight - they have no being;
Nought is but that which feels itself to be.
(768-785.)

During his last years it was increasingly borne in upon Shelley that he had no audience. With the completion of Prometheus Unbound and the Cenci he began to write, possibly at Mary Shelley's insistence, a series of occasional poems inspired as much by newspaper accounts of daily events as anything else. But his heart was not really in it. "I try to be what I might have been," he says of Hellas in a letter to John Gisborne dated October 22, 1821, "but am not successful. I find that (I dare say I shall quote wrong)

Der herrlichsten, den sich der Geist empfängt
Nängt immer fremd und fremder stoff sich an.[17]

Mary Shelley, who saw quite clearly what was happening to Shelley as a result of his failure to acquire even a limited audience, did her best to persuade him to adopt subjects "that would more suit the popular taste".[18]

And her reasons are in themselves sound enough.

> It was not only that I wished him to acquire popularity as redounding to his fame; but I believed that he would obtain a greater mastery over his own powers, and a greater happiness in his mind, if public applause crowned his endeavours.[19]

What Mary Shelley had in mind were more works like The Cenci, which she considered to be of "surpassing excellence".[20] Some critics, agreeing with Mary, see in The Cenci and also in The Triumph of Life the beginning of a new phase in Shelley's career which, had he lived, he might have pursued.

What Shelley attempts in The Cenci, as well as in The Triumph of Life (though in a different way), is "as nearly as possible to represent the characters as they probably were" and thus avoid "under a thin veil converting names and actions of the sixteenth century into cold impersonations of my own mind."[21] Instead, that is, of withdrawing "life's dark veil from before the scene of things",[22] he will present the "dark veil" itself and reveal, in all its horror, the utterly demoralizing influence that environment can have upon a sensitive soul. He will reveal the world as it actually exists, unredeemed by the imagination.

Such an attempt on Shelley's part is opposed, of course, to the view of poetry expressed in his Defense. Yet there were for Shelley sound grounds upon which a drama like The Cenci, as opposed to an ideal drama like Prometheus Unbound, could be justified. One reason why he had such

extravagant praise for Byron's Don Juan, for example, was that it unveiled "in its true deformity what is worst in human nature".[23] Shelley no doubt saw in much of Byron's poetry the negative aspect of his own idealism. Like Byron, he was unable to accept human society as it existed and, like Byron, he found it difficult to disbelieve in Necessity. In fact, it may not be going too far to suggest that Shelley, as a man, was a rather thorough-going Necessitarian and that only as a poet could he transcend his purely human vision of life. The war between the purely human and the purely divine is evident throughout Shelley's career. What he admired most about poetry was the fact that it was not human. Like Plato, he believed that a poet in the act of creation was possessed and given over to divine madness. Such states, however, were of short duration and the poet, by virtue of the limitations of the poetic faculty, must of necessity sink back into his essential human nature and become, though to a lesser extent, the slave of the accidental impressions that invade his consciousness and dictate his behaviour.

The conversations which Shelley records, under the guise of fictional invention, between Byron and himself in Julian and Maddalo are in a very real sense, conversations between one side of Shelley's nature and the other. The essence of the debate between Julian and Maddalo is concern-

ed with free will <u>versus</u> destiny. It is worth examining in some detail. Julian and Maddalo are riding in a gondola when they hear the vesper bells ringing from the tower of an asylum. Maddalo moralizes upon the sound:

> "And such," - he cried, "is our mortality;
> And this must be the emblem and the sign
> Of what should be eternal and divine: -
> And like that black and dreary bell, the soul
> Hung in a heaven-illumined tower, must toll
> Our thoughts and our desires to meet below
> Round the rent heart, and pray - as madmen do
> For what? they know not, till the night of death,
> As sunset that strange vision, severeth
> Our memory from itself, and us from all
> We sought, and yet were baffled!"
> (120-130.)

The following morning Julian calls on Maddalo and plays with his child until the Count comes down. When he enters Julian says to him:

> . . . "See
> This lovely child, blithe, innocent and free;
> She spends a happy time, with little care,
> While we to such sick thoughts subjected are
> As came on you last night - it is our will
> That thus enchains us to permitted ill -
> We might be otherwise - we might be all
> We dream of happy, high, majestical.
> Where is the love, beauty, and truth we seek
> But in our mind? and if we were not weak,
> Should we be less in deed than in desire?"
> (166-176.)

Maddalo interjects: "You talk Utopia" (179). But Julian, not daunted, goes on:

> . . . "and those who try may find
> How strong the chains are which our spirit bind:
> Brittle perchance as straw. . . We are assured,
> Much may be conquered, much may be endured,
> Of what degrades and crushes us. We know
> That we have power over ourselves to do
> And suffer - what, we know not till we try;

But something nobler than to live and die -
So taught those kings of old philosophy
Who reigned before Religion made men blind;
And those who suffer with their suffering kind
Yet feel their faith, religion."
(180-190.)

Maddalo, however, is by no means convinced. Determined to show Julian how wrong his Utopian ideas are, he suggests that they visit a madman in the asylum who talked very much as Julian talked. Julian agrees and the next day they go to make their visit. There follows a disjointed monologue by the madman who has been driven mad by his unfaithful mistress. His mutterings are significant for much of their content re-appears in Shelley's account of his own quest for his epipsyche in the Epipsychidion. The madman is speaking:

'Nay, was it I who wooed thee to this breast,
Which, like a serpent, thou envenomest
As in repayment of the warmth it lent?
Didst thou not seek me for thine own content?
Did not thy love awaken mine? I thought
That thou wert she who said, 'You kiss me not
Ever; I fear you do not love me now' -
In truth I loved even to my overthrow.
(397-405.)

These lines are echoed in Shelley's account of his first false imaginings in the Epipsychidion:

There, - One, whose voice was venomed melody
Sate by a well, under blue night-shade bowers;
The breath of her false mouth was like faint flowers,
Her touch was as electric poison, - flame
Out of her looks into my vitals came,
And from her living cheeks and bosom flew
A killing air, which pierced like honey-dew
Into the core of my green heart, and lay
Upon its leaves; until, as hair grown gray

O'er a young brow, they hid its unblown prime
With ruins of unseasonable time.
(256-266.)

Julian, however, after this rather morbid encounter, is still not convinced. He believes that if it were possible for him to study the maniac's ravings, just "as men study some stubborn art/ For their own good" (571-572), he might find some entrance into "the caverns of his mind" (573) and reclaim him "from his dark estate" (574). Julian sees far more in these ravings than does Maddalo: "For the wild language of his grief was high,/ Such as, in measure, were called poetry" (541-542). In other words, he sees in the madman evidences of a divine madness run amuck,which, could he work with him, might be brought into focus.

Shelley's concern with the nature of the creative process in Prometheus Unbound and the Epipsychidion is a fulfilment of Julian's unfulfilled design in Julian and Maddalo. At the close of his conversation with Maddalo, Julian says: ". . . but what I now designed/ Made for long years impression on my mind" (580-581). The statement is prophetic of the great visionary poetry of his maturity.

What, therefore, is evident in this conversational piece is not only an amazingly concise statement concerning Shelley's hopes for man,but also of the way in which poetry, as the revelation of the human mind viewed in terms of the inner harmony of its powers, can administer to the realiza-

tion of those hopes. Implicit within the poem are both the Promethean and psyche-epipsyche inter-related themes that fuse into a single apocalyptic vision in Prometheus Unbound. In the point of view expressed by Maddalo, on the other hand, is the expression of doubt, a rather grim determinism that prevented Shelley's imagination from ever really taking flight in Queen Mab. To write the kind of poetry which would present human nature from Maddalo's point of view was certainly well within Shelley's powers. But it required of Shelley that he do so at the sacrifice of his own imagination. And to do this was ultimately to reject poetry as he himself defined it. Hence, after speaking of her hopes for Shelley's success as a poet, Mary Shelley concludes with hard-won resignation:

> But my persuasions were vain, the mind could not be bent from its natural inclination. Shelley shrunk instinctively from portraying human passion, with its mixture of good and evil, of disappointment and disquiet.[24]

And while the natural inclination could not be bent, neither could it long survive without Promethean hope. As that hope faded - even while Shelley was writing Hellas he tells Byron: "I have no political news but such as announces the slow victory of the spirit of the past over that of the present."[25] - his psychic energy became more and more exhausted. "I could be content either with the Hell or the Paradise of poetry;" he writes to Ollier on January 20, 1821, "but the torments of its purgatory vex me, without exciting

my power sufficiently to put an end to the vexation."[26] And the vision of a "brighter Hellas" could not really pull him out of that purgatory. One last thing could truly pull him back to his proper Paradise, not the Paradise of "a nightingale, who sits in darkness and sings to cheer its own solitude with sweet sounds",[27] but the Paradise beyond "the last clouds of cold mortality" (Adonais, 486).

> Why linger, why turn back, why shrink, my Heart?
> Thy hopes are gone before: from all things here
> They have departed; thou shouldst now depart!
> A light is past from the revolving year,
> And man, and woman; and what still is dear
> Attracts to crush, repels to make thee wither.
> The soft sky smiles, - the low wind whispers near:
> No more let life divide what Death can join together.
> (469-477.)

The news of Keats's death, brought on he believed by the adverse criticism of his poems, spoke home to Shelley in a way that the news of fighting in Greece could not. In a mood of bitter grief, he began his elegy. As he wrote, the vexation of spirit was gradually overcome and reading his own imminent fate in the death of Keats, he harnessed all his imaginative power into a triumphant hymn that pierced veil after veil until, like Dante, he stood in the "awful shadow" of that ultimate throne.

The poem, therefore, divides naturally into two parts. The first part (stanzas 1-37) laments the death of Adonais; the second (stanzas 38-55) rejoices in his resur-

rection. The controlling vision of this larger pattern is the awakening of Adonais "from the dream of life" (344) of which his own "quick Dreams,/ The passion-winged Ministers,of thought" (73-74) had provided the intimation. Within this larger controlling vision of death and resurrection is presented, in the first part, its shadow, death and resurrection viewed in terms of the natural cycle of death and resurrection in nature. The second part of the poem, then, is the imaginative recreation of the first part, the transfiguration of the cycle of nature arresting from decay the "visitations of the divinity in Man."[28] Instead, however, of directing this transfigured vision at the world in order to provide mankind with a message of Promethean hope, as he does at the end of Prometheus Unbound, Shelley directs it away from the world where it unites with its source.

For purposes of analysis, the poem will be examined on various levels in an effort to show how Shelley took the myth of Adonis rooted fundamentally in the order of nature and adapted it to a vision that transcends that order. Adonais, like the Epipsychidion, reveals the influence of Dante. When he says that Adonais is a "highly wrought piece of art"[29] he has in mind its various levels of meaning such as he was himself aware of in Dante's Divine Comedy. It may be of some value, therefore, to quote a portion of Dante's

letter to Can Grande Della Scala in which he discusses the meaning of his epic.

For the clarity of what is to be said, one must realize that the meaning of this work is not simple, but rather is to be called polysemous, that is, having many meanings. The first meaning is the one obtained through the letter; the second is the one obtained through the thing signified by the letter. The first is called literal, the second allegorical or moral or anagogical. In order that this manner of treatment may appear more clearly, it may be applied to the following verses: "When Israel went out of Egypt, the house of Jacob from a people of strange language, Judah was his sanctuary and Israel his dominion." For if we look to the letter alone, the departure of the children of Israel from Egypt in the time of Moses is indicated to us; if to the allegory, our redemption accomplished by Christ is indicated to us; if to the moral sense, the conversion of the soul from the woe and misery of sin to a state of grace is indicated to us; if to the anagogical sense, the departure of the consecrated soul from the slavery of this corruption to the liberty of eternal glory is indicated. And though these mystic senses may be called by various names, they can generally be spoken of as allegorical, since they are diverse from the literal or historical.[30]

On the literal or historical level, Adonais concerns the death of John Keats as a result of the vicious attacks made upon his Endymion in the Quarterly Review; on the allegorical level, the poem concerns the plight of the visionary in a society controlled by tyrannical forces; on the moral level, it concerns the release of the soul from the corruptions of earthly existence; on the anagogical level, it concerns, to use Dante's words, "the departure of the consecrated soul from the slavery of this corruption to the liberty of eternal glory." And these various levels of meaning were integrated into the mythological framework

of the dying and rising god, Adonis.

The whole problem of evaluating Dante's influence upon Shelley, which is essential for an understanding of the poem, requires a proper understanding of Shelley's view of Dante as a poet. Shelley interpreted Dante's Christian archetypal pattern in terms of pagan myth. Behind this interpretation lies Shelley's conviction, expressed as early as 1815 in his Essay on Christianity, that the teachings of Christ were, as he says in his Defense of Poetry, "the exoteric expression of the esoteric doctrines of the poetry and wisdom of antiquity."[31] These "esoteric doctrines" upon which the teachings of Christ were based derive from Plato's "moral and intellectual system of doctrine, comprehending at once the past, the present, and the future condition of man."[32] Plato, in turn, followed the doctrines of Timaeus and Pythagoras.

Viewing Christ's teachings in this light (and, therefore Dante's vision, which, he believed, was the poetic fulfilment of Christ's revelation) it follows that Shelley's scheme of salvation would be expressed within the framework of a pagan archetypal pattern. The nature of that pattern has already been explored in some detail, especially in the second and third chapters. Only so much as is necessary for a proper interpretation of Adonais need be repeated here.

The "exoteric doctrines" of Plato which he derived

from Timaeus and Pythagoras embodied what is essentially the Orphic view of man. The Orphic theology, in turn, was rooted in a spiritual interpretation of the rather primitive myth of Dionysus. The origin of man, in the Orphic cosmogony, lies in the devouring of Dionysus-Zagreus by the Titans; out of the ashes of the god, man was created. The dual nature of man, which is the duality of spirit and flesh, therefore, is the result of the descent of an immortal and divine spirit (the god, Dionysus) into the corruption of flesh. Once imprisoned in the flesh, the spirit longs to escape and re-assume its proper divinity, and, in this escape, brought about in the Orphic religion by various rites of purification, Dionysus, the divine form of humanity, is resurrected. This mythical vision of a dying and rising god Plato expresses in terms of his doctrine of pre-existence. Before man's descent into flesh, he exists as a pure soul standing in the presence of the Forms. Once his soul makes its descent into the mutable world of the body, it forgets the world of Forms. From this state of forgetfulness it is gradually awakened, during its cycle of incarnation, by such things as beautiful object and beautiful ideas which remind it of that ideal Beauty that belongs to the world of Forms. All life, from this point of view, is a preparation for death, and death itself a return to that source from which the soul originally descended.

This anagogical vision is the archetypal pattern underlying Adonais and explains why, when Shelley presents himself as a poet standing before the corpse of Keats, he images himself as a votary of Dionysus.[33] It explains further why Shelley chose to present the archetypal image of Keats in terms of the Adonis myth of a dying and rising god. What Shelley believed he was doing in Adonais was restoring this myth, corrupted in the hands of the bucolic poets, to its original imaginative significance.

As might well be imagined, Shelley makes no attempt to deal with Keats in a literal or historical way. He could have endeavoured, as he did in The Cenci, "to represent the characters as they probably were," thus avoiding what he ironically calls "the error of making them actuated by my own conceptions of right or wrong, false or true; thus under a thin veil converting names and actions. . . into cold impersonations of my own mind."[34] Shelley is not concerned with Keats as a man, but as a poet, and as a poet, Keats is Adonis, which is to say, Lord. "Imagination", says Shelley in his Preface to The Cenci, "is as the immortal God which should assume flesh for the redemption of mortal passion."[35] Viewed as a poet, this is Keats's role in the poem. Having assumed flesh to redeem fallen man through his poetry, he is put to death by the enemies of vision, descends as a body into the charnel house of Death,

and rises again as a soul into the "white radiance of Eternity" (463).

It is possible therefore to ignore the fact that the review in the Quarterly Review did not kill Keats, that he died not in the Spring (as in the poem) but in the Winter-February 23, that Shelley's estimate of his poetry was not nearly so high as the valuation he places upon it in the poem. Shelley writes as a literalist of the imagination, not of fact. What is actual has no meaning whatsoever for him unless viewed in the light of the ideal. The conflict between the real and the ideal he had argued out with Byron and his conclusions are there for the record in Julian and Maddalo. Not even Mary Shelley could for long convince him otherwise. At the same time, he realized that he could not long continue singing aloud to himself, and in the death of Keats he read his own imminent fate.

On the allegorical level, Shelley makes use of the Adonis myth to present the plight of the visionary who is the victim of social tyranny. In the myth, Adonis is a young shepherd with a passion for hunting. Aphrodite, the goddess of love and beauty who has persuaded him to become her lover, attempts to dissuade him from the pursuit of wild beasts lest he be killed. One day, when Aphrodite was absent, presiding over ceremonies in her honour, Adonis returned to the hunt and was mortally wounded by a wild boar. When Aphrodite is informed of what has happened, she hastens

to his side to lament his fate and mourn that she cannot die with him. This portion of the myth provides the allegorical base for Shelley's attack upon the critics.

Urania comes "out of her secret Paradise" (208) to find Adonis after receiving word of his injury. Arriving in his presence at the moment of death, she addresses him:

> "O gentle child, beautiful as thou wert,
> "Why didst thou leave the trodden paths of men
> "Too soon, and with weak hands though the mighty heart
> "Dare the unpastured dragon in his den?
> "Defenceless as thou wert, oh! where was then
> "Wisdom the mirrored shield, or scorn the spear?
> "Or hadst thou waited the full cycle, when
> "Thy spirit should have filled its crescent sphere,
> "The monsters of life's waste had fled from thee like deer.
> (235-243.)

What Shelley is here saying about Keats was that he was not yet ready to join forces with the enemies of tyranny, to "dare the unpastured dragon in his den". He writes to the Editor of the Quarterly Review concerning the criticism of Endymion:

> The first effects are described to me to have resembled insanity, and it was by assiduous watching that he was restrained from effecting purposes of suicide. The agony of his sufferings at length produced the rupture of a blood-vessel in the lungs, and the usual process of consumption appears to have begun.[36]

So far as Keats's Endymion was concerned, Shelley was almost as critical of the poem as was the Quarterly Review. Writing to Ollier on September 6, 1819, he says of

the poem: "much praise is due to me for having read it, the author's intention appearing to be that no person should possibly get to the end of it."[37] At the same time, he recognized the germ of promise in the poem, and, it would appear, it was Shelley's hope that, under his tutelage, that promise might be realized. Quite apart from his concern for Keats's health, he invited him to Italy that he might educate him in his chosen vocation. In his letter to Keats on July 27, 1820, in which he issues his invitation, he goes on to say:

> I have lately read your "Endymion" again and even with a new sense of the treasures of poetry it contains, though treasures poured forth with indistinct profusion. This, people in general will not endure, and that is the cause of the comparatively few copies which have been sold. I feel persuaded that you are capable of the greatest things, so you but will. I always tell Ollier to send you copies of my books. - "Prometheus Unbound" I imagine you will receive nearly at the same time with this letter.[38]

From this letter it would appear that Shelley had hopes that Keats might develop into a Promethean poet. To do this, however, it was necessary for Keats to develop certain powers of resistance before entering the arena of public disapproval. And this power Shelley thought he could develop in Keats. He had suffered in the same arena and gradually steeled himself to the perpetual onslaught of criticism.

In the eyes of Shelley, as well as in the eyes of Hunt and Byron, Keats was the object of concern and pity

who might, if he could once gather inner strength, develop into a great poet. This concern for Keats is revealed in the correspondence between the three friends. Byron, for example, writes to Shelley on April 26, 1821:

> I am very sorry to hear what you say of Keats - is it actually true? I did not think criticism had been so killing. Though I differ from you essentially in your estimate of his performances, I so much abhor all unnecessary pain, that I would rather he had been seated on the highest peak of Parnassus than have perished in such a manner. . . . I read the review of "Endymion" in the Quarterly. It was severe, - but surely not so severe as many reviews in that and other journals upon others.
>
> I recollect the effect upon me of the Edinburgh on my first poem; it was rage, and resistance, and redress - but not despondency, nor despair. I grant that those are not amiable feelings; but, in this world of bustle and broil, and especially in the career of writing, a man should calculate his powers of resistance before he goes into the arena.[39]

Thus, among the mourners who gather around Keats is Byron. And he is there, not because he admired Keats's performance during his brief career, but because he had the kind of resistance that Keats lacked and which Shelley hoped that, had he lived, he might have gained. Of the critics who attacked Keats, Shelley says:

> ". . . how they fled,
> "When like Apollo, from his golden bow,
> "The Pythian of the age one arrow sped
> "And smiled! - The spoilers tempt no second blow,
> "They fawn on the proud feet that spurn them lying low.
> (248-252.)

Shelley, of course, knew that Byron was right. Had he been able, he would have attempted to strengthen Keats with a more Byronic attitude to his critics. But, in another sense, Byron was wrong. To accept Byron's attitude

whole-heartedly required the sacrifice of his own idealism. And this divided attitude is evident in the poem. Shelley's sense of indignation and rage bursts forth when he comes to his attack upon the critics. But that rage is subservient to the larger vision of the poem. The rather paternal and consoling attitude towards Keats undergoes, as the vision of the poem expands, a metamorphosis. Far from watching over Keats with paternal care, Keats (the"soul of Adonais") is watching over him andbeaconing him to "the abode where the Eternal are." To examine this metamorphosis requires an analysis of the moral and anagogical levels of the poem.

Shelley's attack upon the critics when viewed within the total pattern of the poem is less an attack than a statement of the inevitable experience of the visionary in this world. The law of Necessity which Shelley presents in Queen Mab is still there in Adonais. Indeed, the myth of Adonis, as he found it in Bion and Moschus, is simply a mythopoeic treatment of the doctrine of Necessity. Adonis is a vegetation god and as such he is doomed eternally to repeat the endless cycle of death and re-birth. The most that the poet can hope to achieve is to arrest the moment of re-birth (the visitations of the divinity in Man") from its inevitable decay. What killed Adonis was not the wild boar but the law of Necessity that governs the cyclic round of nature.

He will awake no more, oh, never more! -
Within the twilight chamber spreads apace,
The shadow of white Death, and at the door
Invisible Corruption waits to trace
His extreme way to her dim dwelling-place;
The eternal Hunger sits, but pity and awe
Sooth her pale rage, nor dares she to deface
So fair a prey, till darkness and the law
Of change, shall o'er his sleep the mortal curtain
draw.
(64-72.)

What killed Keats was not the critics so much as "the contagion of the world's slow stain" (356). That "contagion" is the "curse which binds us to be subjected to the accident of surrounding impressions;" the critics are simply the guardians of that "curse".

The lament for Keats in the first part of the poem lies in the fact that the contagion spread too fast; he "died on the promise of the fruit" (53). For that, he believed the critics were responsible, and it accounts for his outburst of anger.

In the larger vision, however, Keats has escaped from the clutches of Necessity. Toward this release Shelley himself felt himself to be gradually moving. Between Queen Mab and Prometheus Unbound he had come a long way toward the clarification of his own apocalyptic vision. The one element, however, which he could not absorb into that vision was Necessity. At the end of Prometheus Unbound, Demogorgon gives a warning: Eternity, "Mother of many acts and hours," (IV, 566) may release "the serpent that would

clasp her with his length" (IV, 567). And, at the end of the third act, the Spirit of the Hour (the hour of humanity's release) provides the reason for this warning:

> . . . but man:
> Passionless? no; yet free from guilt or pain,
> Which were, for his will made, or suffered them,
> Nor yet exempt, tho' ruling them like slaves,
> From chance, and death, and mutability,
> The clogs of that which else might oversoar
> The loftiest star of unascended heaven,
> Pinnacled dim in the intense inane.
> (III, iv, 197-204.)

By eliminating the Promethean aspect of his apocalyptic vision (and therefore his concern for the world), he hoped, in the Epipsychidion, to penetrate beyond the realm of "chance, and death, and mutability" through his fusion with his epipsyche. He would, as it were, "oversoar/ The loftiest star of unascended heaven" and become, like the sun, a pure flame forever burning and yet forever unconsumed, immortal like a god, having within himself the source of his own life.

> One passion in twin-hearts, which grows and grew,
> 'Till like two meteors of expanding flame,
> Those spheres instinct with it become the same,
> Touch, mingle, are transfigured; ever still
> Burning, yet ever inconsumable:
> In one another's substance finding food,
> Like flames too pure and light and unimbued
> To nourish their bright lives with baser prey,
> Which points to Heaven and cannot pass away:
> One hope within two wills, one will beneath
> Two overshadowing minds, one life, one death,
> One Heaven, one Hell, one immortality,
> And one annihilation.
> (575-587.)

And with the word "annihilation" Shelley has reached beyond

the realm of vision, beyond the analogia visionis to the apocalypse itself.

> Woe is me!
> The winged words on which my soul would pierce
> Into the height of Love's rare Universe,
> Are chains of lead around its flight of fire -
> I pant, I sink, I tremble, I expire!
> (587-591.)

Through his death, then, Keats has surpassed Shelley. And it is his realization that Keats's death is better than his best piece of poetry that lures him to the brink. Confronted by that unimagined apocalypse, his own "winged words" on which his soul "would pierce/ Into the height of Love's rare Universe" are "chains of lead". Beyond the Word is silence of which the Word is but an echo. Adonais ends in mystical rapture in which Shelley feels himself being consumed in his own "flight of fire."

> The fire for which all thirst; now beams on me,
> Consuming the last clouds of cold mortality.
> (485-486.)

On the anagogical level, therefore, the vision of the first part of the poem is transfigured. The cycles of death and resurrection in nature are but the reflection or image of unimagined death and resurrection of which poetry can only present the analogue. That is why he says of all great poetry: "Veil after veil may be undrawn, and the inmost naked beauty of the meaning never exposed."[40]

Adonais, then, is linked in a curious way to his first apocalyptic poem, Queen Mab. In the earlier poem,

Shelley's whole emphasis is upon the process of death and re-birth in nature as the analogue of the death and re-birth of humanity. The anagogical level of the soul's descent into the world and its ultimate ascent to the "white radiance of Eternity" is merely suggested. Adonais reverses the emphasis: the anagogical level now becomes the central focus of the poem. And with this anagogical emphasis, Shelley had explored the whole range of his apocalyptic vision, the various levels of which are implicit, though imperfectly related one to the other, in Queen Mab.

Chapter 10

THE TRIUMPH OF LIFE

Shelley's examination of the internal hierarchy of man's faculties in the Epipsychidion provides the basis upon which he undertakes, in A Defense of Poetry, to examine what he considers one of the basic problems of the age in which he lived. "The cultivation of those sciences", he says,

> which have enlarged the limits of the empire of man over the external world, has, for want of the poetical faculty, proportionally circumscribed those of the internal world; and man, having enslaved the elements, remains himself a slave. To what but a cultivation of the mechanical arts in a degree disproportioned to the presence of the creative faculty, which is the basis of all knowledge, is to be attributed the abuse of all invention for abridging and combining labour, to the exasperation of the inequality of mankind? From what other cause has it arisen that these inventions which should have lightened, have added a weight to the curse imposed on Adam? Thus Poetry and the principle of Self, of which Money is the visible incarnation, are the God and Mammon of the world.[1]

His own age, in other words, is essentially one in which reason has usurped the place that properly belongs to the imagination. "The promoters of utility," as he describes the votaries of Reason, have failed to "confine their administration of the concerns of the inferior powers of our

nature within the limits due to the superior ones."[2] They have lost sight of those "first principles which belong to the imagination".[3]

At the same time, Shelley goes on, there is some evidence that the age of Reason is about to give way to an new age of the Imagination. "It is impossible", he says,

> to read the compositions of the most celebrated writers of the present day without being startled with the electric life which burns within their words. They measure the circumference and sound the depths of human nature with a comprehensive and all-penetrating spirit, and they are themselves perhaps the most sincerely astonished at its manifestations; for it is less their spirit than the spirit of the age.[4]

Shelley's view of "the most celebrated writers of the present day", however, requires some qualification. Among them he would certainly include Southey, Wordsworth and Coleridge, and in each of them he was aware of the evidences of a certain disillusion, a betrayal of the imagination and, therefore, of the cause of liberty. On January 7, 1812, he writes to Elizabeth Kitchener:

> I do not think so highly of Southey as I did. It is to be confessed that to see him in his family, to behold him in his domestic circle, he appears in a most amiable light. - I do not mean that he is or can be the great character which once I linked him to. His mind is terribly narrow, compared to it. Once he was this character, - everything you can conceive of practised virtue. - Now he is corrupted by the world, contaminated by Custom: it rends my heart when I think what he might have been! Wordsworth and Coleridge I have yet to see.[5]

For Coleridge he had more admiration and therefore more sympathy. In his Letter to Maria Gisborne (July 1, 1820)

he writes:

> You will see Coleridge - he who sits obscure
> In the exceeding lustre, and the pure
> Intense irradiation of a mind,
> Which, with its own internal lightning blind,
> Flags wearily through darkness and despair -
> A cloud-encircled meteor of the air,
> A hooded eagle among blinding owls.
> (202-208.)

To this penetrating portrait of Coleridge (whom he never met) should be added Mary Shelley's comment in her Note on the early poems:

> He regarded his change of opinions as rather an act of the will than conviction, and believed that in his inner heart he would be haunted by what Shelley considered the better and the holier aspirations of his youth.[6]

Finally, of Wordsworth, he writes to Peacock (July 25, 1818):

> What a beastly and pitiful wretch that Wordsworth! That such a man should be such a poet! I can compare him with no one but Simonides, that flatterer of the Sicilian tyrants, and at the same time the most natural and tender of lyric poets.[7]

What Shelley saw, therefore, among his fellow poets was evidences of gradual disintegration. Not even poets were immune from the "contagion of the world's slow stain." And Shelley was himself aware that his own imaginative powers were on the decline. He was, by 1822, no longer capable of sustained imaginative effort. Writing to John Gisborne on April 10, 1822,[8] he is surprised to discover that <u>Hellas</u> has gone through the press "with fewer mistakes than any other poem I ever published." But his surprise is accompanied by a new sense of indifference. "Who", he asks,

"acted as midwife to this last of my orphans, introducing it to oblivion, and me to my accustomed failure?" He asks for Gisborne's opinion of the poem, but implies that his opinion, good or bad, can now make little difference to him. "It was written", he says , "without much care, in one of those few moments of enthusiasm which now seldom visit me, and which make me pay dear for their visits."

The "visitations of the divinity in Man"[9] were, by 1822, almost extinct, and when he felt them in a moment of excitement they were accompanied by such psychic exhaustion that he almost preferred them to pass him by. Of Charles the First, he says he writes by fits but "cannot seize on the conception of the subject as a whole".[10] What consolations were left to him were to be found not in idealistic literature, but in literature whose sole charm was derived from the expression of despair. "I have been reading over and over again Faust," he continues in that same letter,

and always with sensations which no other composition excites. It deepens the gloom and augments the rapidity of ideas, and would therefore seem to me an unfit study for any person who is prey to the reproaches of memory, and the delusions of an imagination not to be restrained. And yet the pleasure of sympathising with emotions known only to few, although they derive their sole charm from despair and the scorn of the narrow good we can attain in our present state, seems more than to cure the pain which belongs to them. Perhaps all discontent with the less (to use a Platonic sophism) supposes the sense of a just claim to the greater, and that we admirers of Faust are in the right road to Paradise. Such a supposition is not more absurd, and is certainly less demoniacal than that of Wordsworth, where he says -

> This earth,
> Which is the world of all of us, and where
> We find our happiness, or not at all.

As if after sixty years of suffering here, we were to be roasted alive for sixty million more in Hell, or charitably annihilated by a coup de grace [sic] of the bungler who brought us into existence at first!

At the same time that Shelley was reading "over and over again" Goethe's Faust (and translating passages), he was also reading Byron's latest volume of poetry, published in 1821 and containing Cain, A Mystery, Sardanapalus and The Two Foscari.[11] "In my opinion", he says of the volume,

It contains finer poetry than has appeared in England since the publication of Paradise Regained. Cain is apocalyptic - it is a revelation not before communicated to man."[12]

What was the revelation that Byron communicated to man of which Shelley speaks so highly? Cain, in many respects follows the archetypal pattern of Shelley's own apocalyptic vision. It introduces into that vision, however, a "demoniacal" element that Shelley never, in the great years of his visionary development, considered. Cain, like Shelley's Prometheus, rebels against the Jehovah-Jupiter conception of God. Guided by Lucifer (Shelley's archetypal hero) he journeys into worlds older than Adam and into an abyss of space beyond both sun and moon. As the visionary journey unfolds, it dawns upon Cain (at the suggestion of Lucifer) that death may hold the key to the deepest mysteries that perplex man in his earthly state. This dawning realization on the part of Cain, is, of course, the realization that lies at the very centre of Adonais. In Shelley's poem, however, this leads to a vision in which the "dome of

many-coloured glass" is smashed and the poet finds himself standing on the brink of annihilation. In Cain, the dark side of this same vision is revealed. The same state of mind leads to the murdering of Abel.

How aware Shelley was of this sinister aspect of Byron's apocalyptic vision it is impossible to say with any certainty. His identification in Adonais with Cain in the same breath that he identifies himself with Christ would suggest that, at least when he wrote the poem, he was thinking of Cain as an outcast rejected by men. At any rate, it is evident that a very dark shadow had crossed Shelley's mind sometime very shortly after he completed Adonais. His thoughts became increasingly morbid. Goethe's Faust, he says, is "an unfit study for any person who is prey to the reproaches of memory, and the delusions of an imagination not to be restrained." And for this very reason the poem seemed to fascinate him.

It has already been suggested in the last chapter that Julian and Maddalo presents two sides of a single personality. And in the last year the Byronic aspect of Shelley's personality appears to have re-asserted itself. The victory of the world over the domain of the imagination, a victory that he recognized in "the most celebrated writers of the present day"[13] was a source of profound grief to him. With the failing of his own creative power he saw that he

was destined to suffer a similar fate. While it is necessary to speculate at this point, it would appear likely that some such meditation was harassing Shelley when he wrote The Triumph of Life. He describes himself in the opening stanzas of the poem as having stayed awake all night filled with "thoughts which must remain untold" (21). With the coming of morning, however, " a strange trance over my fancy grew"(29).

The vision that appears to Shelley, as might be expected, concerns the gradual loss of creative power and the dismal spectacle of the world that emerges when that power has been eclipsed. As will be evident in the actual analysis of the poem, Shelley has been influenced, in part, by Wordsworth's "Intimations Ode" and, in part, by Byron's dark vision. Throughout the poem, however, Shelley remains curiously detached, as if he were not himself engaged in the appalling vision that passes before his mind's eye. This detachment, it will be argued, is not the evidence of a new phase of Shelley's maturity; it is the evidence of Shelley's final withdrawal from the world. He can see with devastating clarity what lies ahead for him (for such heroes as Rousseau and Plato are trapped in this vision that unfolds), and from that future he has completely divorced himself. "Thy hopes are gone before: from all things here/ They have departed; thou shouldst now depart" (Adonais, 470-471).

The Triumph of Life provides the confirmation, if confirmation is needed, that Shelley meant what he said.

Quite apart from the evidence of the poem, there is, in the letters which Shelley wrote immediately before his last fatal journey, the record of a state of mind that suggests the completeness of his withdrawal. He wrote to Edward Trelawney, for example, on June 18, 1822:

> You, of course, enter into society at Leghorn: should you meet with any scientific person, capable of preparing the Prussic Acid, or essential oil of bitter almonds, I should regard it as a great kindness if you could procure me a small quantity. It requires the greatest caution in preparation, and ought to be highly concentrated; I would give any price for this medicine; you remember we talked of it the other night, and we both expressed a wish to possess it; my wish was serious, and sprung from the desire to avoid needless suffering. I need not tell you I have no intention of suicide at present, but I confess it would be a comfort to me to hold in my possession that golden key to the chamber of perpetual rest.[14]

In his last letter, written to Jane Williams on July 4, 1822, he tells her that he is returning to Leghorn that night and that he "shall urge him [Williams] to sail with the first fair wind, without expecting me."[15] He then concludes:

> How soon these hours past, and how slowly they return to pass so soon again, and perhaps for ever, in which we have lived together so intimately, so happily! - Adieu, my dearest friend - I only write these lines for the pleasure of tracing what will meet your eyes.[16]

There is a note of finality in these lines to Jane Williams. Did Shelley mean, literally, to say Adieu "perhaps forever"? Whether or not this was his intention, it is evident that

his "spirit's bark" had set sail

> Far from the shore, far from the trembling throng
> Whose sails were never to the tempest given.

Before analysing the poem it may be helpful to examine what is going on in it. The poet is lying beneath an old chestnut tree at dawn in a state of waking trance. He is conscious of the sounds and sights of nature around him, feels, for example, the dew upon his brow and in his hair and hears the sound of the ocean. As he gazes upon the scene before him, a vision comes before his mind which is so transparent that he can see through it to the outer world of nature. The vision is then described as it unfolds before him.

The poet sees himself sitting beside a public way watching vast streams of people rushing to and fro. None of them appear to know where they are going or why. They are quite oblivious to the sounds and sights of nature that belong, not to the world of the vision, but to the outer world in which the poet was basking before the vision descended upon him. Suddenly into their midst there comes a cold, intense and glaring light that eclipses the sun. It is a chariot driven by a Janus-visaged Shadow with four faces, each of which has its eyes banded.

When this chariot comes into the midst of the throng, they crowd around it and break into "fierce song and maniac dance"(110). Before the spectacle the poet stands aghast,

for he realizes that all humanity is caught up in this frenzied Bacchanalia which continues until "the fiery band which held/ Their natures, snaps" (157-158). Only those, he says, "who could not tame/ Their spirits to the conquerors" (128-129) were free; "as soon/ As they had touched the world with living flame," (129-130) they "fled back like eagles to their native noon" (131).

"Struck to the heart by this sad pageantry" (176), the poet attempts to understand the meaning of what he has seen. In the midst of asking questions "half to myself" (177) a voice provides the answer: what he has seen is "Life" (180). The poet turns and, to his horror, realizes that what he thought was an old root was, in reality, "one of those deluded crew" (184). The grass beneath his feet was this wretched being's hair and the holes which "he vainly sought to hide/ Were or had been eyes" (187-188). This miserable wretch, aware of the poet's thoughts, warns him not to join the dance as he had done. He says that he will tell him how he came to be a part of the pageant. The poet then can make up his own mind: "If thirst of knowledge shall not then abate,/ Follow it thou even to the night" (193-194). The voice is that of Rousseau who goes on to lament that he lived too long:

> And if the spark with which Heaven lit my spirit
> Had been with purer nutriment supplied,
>
> Corruption would not now thus much inherit

> Of what was once Rousseau, - nor this disguise
> Stained that which ought to have disdained to wear it.
> (201-205)

The poet asks him who were those who made up the pathetic throng and Rousseau answers that they are all those who in this world failed through lack of self-knowledge to gain mastery over themselves. "Let them pass" (243), the poet says, for he is no longer interested in those who drew "new figures on its [life's] false and fragile glass" (247). And those that pass include Plato, Aristotle, Bacon, Caesar, Pope Gregory, Voltaire, Napoleon, Frederick, and Catherine of Russia.

Rousseau, having left the throng behind, now tells the poet his own spiritual history in an effort to understand how it is that he has arrived at this dismal end. He asks the poet to engage himself in what he has to say so that "what thou wouldst be taught I then may learn/ From thee" (307-308). The poet is to cease being the mere spectator and become the "actor or victim in this wretchedness" (306).

In April when the whole earth was filled with the voices of Spring, Rousseau was laid asleep under a mountain "which from unknown time/ Had yawned into a cavern, high and deep" (312-313). From this cavern poured a gentle rivulet which kept the soft grass and the sweet flowers forever moist and filled the whole grove with sounds that banished

all pleasure, pain, love and hate. It was the river of forgetfulness that cast an "oblivious spell" (331). From this sleep, the content of which he cannot remember, he was awakened, and, as he looked upon the earth, "though it was now broad day" (337), it seemed still to keep "a gentle trace/ Of light diviner than the common sun/ Sheds on the common earth" (337-339). The source of this divine light was Iris whom he describes as "a Shape all light" (352). He asks her to tell him - since it appears to him that she has descended "from the realm without a name/ Into this valley of perpetual dream" (396-397) - where he came from, where he is now and why he is here. In reply, she offers him a cup from which he drinks. A new vision, never seen before, is thereby revealed before him. The maiden gradually fades before a new and intenser light as Lucifer gradually fades with the coming of the dawn. This new vision slowly absorbs the earlier vision of Iris, although, like one who hopes "that his day's path may end as he began it" (418), that earlier presence, while no longer seen, is still felt. However, Rousseau goes on, the presence, like "the ghost of a forgotten form of sleep" (428), is finally lost, with the result that he was plunged into "the thickest billows of that living storm" (466) which the poet himself had witnessed. The grove in which he woke now was peopled with dim forms like "a flock of vampire-bats before the glare/ Of

the tropic sun" (484-485). Others were like "restless apes" (493) or "vultures" that made their nests "under the crown which girt with empire/ A baby's or an idiot's brow" (498-499). And as he gazed veil after veil dropped away until the sleepers in the oblivious valley died" (539). "Then, what is life" (544)? the poet cries. At this point, the poem breaks off. The answer, however, is implicit in the vision.

Rousseau's account of the loss of "celestial light" ties together all three parts of the poem. The opening description of the sunrise is linked to Rousseau's vision of nature when laid asleep under a mountain; the vision that the poet has merges with Rousseau's own experience as his own inner light gradually fades. The poet's experience, in other words, parallels Rousseau's experience. There is, however, a profound difference. Rousseau is looking back over his life; the poet is looking ahead. At the very centre of the poem lies a choice which the poet must make: whether he should, like Rousseau, live out his life to this dismal end or withdraw. This is the thought which the poet says "must remain untold." Rousseau puts the question to him:

> "I will unfold that which to this deep scorn
> Led me and my companions, and relate
> The progress of the pageant since the morn;
>
> "If thirst of knowledge shall not then abate
> Follow it thou even to the night.
> (191-195.)

The question that the poet asks is Hamlet's question: "To

be or not to be." Hamlet chose to live because of his fear of what might follow death; Shelley's metaphysic of death, on the other hand, allowed him to make the plunge. Added to this metaphysic he had the example of Goethe's Faust whose thirst for knowledge remained unabated and led him "even to the night," as it had led Rousseau.

Shelley, as early as The Revolt of Islam, recognized that the fate of the visionary in this world was to be a martyr-prophet like Christ. Throughout his life he had been conscious of the precariousness of his own existence. Conscious of the fact that he was doomed to an early death, he was anxious to give before death overtook him a true picture of his own mind. He wanted, that is, to "redeem from decay the visitations of the divinity in Man." No poet was ever more conscious of life as a pilgrimage through the valley of the shadow of death than was Shelley; and if he feared no evil it was because he was comforted by the rod and the staff of his creative faculty.

By 1822, however, he was aware of the fact that his rod and his staff were gone. Standing utterly alone in that valley, he suddenly saw it in the enormity of its horror. What was revealed to him was the dark side of his own apocalyptic vision.

The apocalyptic vision is essentially a judgment upon the world: the day of Resurrection and the day of Judgment

are the same event viewed in two separate perspectives. The unbinding of Prometheus is the destruction of Jupiter. Shelley, as he matured, found it increasingly difficult to come to grips with this dark side of his own vision. Like Prometheus, he managed to gain a moral victory by recalling his curse and forgiving his enemies. At the same time, however, to forgive one's enemies was to destroy them. Jupiter's day of Judgment was the day that Prometheus forgave him. Nietzsche, himself a Promethean philosopher-poet, was later to render articulate this rather diabolical paradox. Christ's teaching concerning forgiveness he recognized as a disguised doctrine of revenge. Shelley's vision of Paradise turned in the end into a vision of Hell equal to anything that he had found in Dante's Inferno. And to that earthly Hell he assigned, in the vision of The Triumph of Life, a sizeable portion of the human race. It is little wonder, therefore, that the poet in the poem stood aghast at what his imagination finally wrought.

While the deepening gloom of The Triumph of Life finds its analogues in the visions of Goethe and Byron, the path leading to that gloom finds its analogue in Wordsworth's "Intimations Ode." With the loss of "celestial light" (3) Wordsworth found his consolations "in years that bring the philosophic mind" (187). The fundamental difference between Wordsworth's "Intimations Ode" and Shelley's Triumph

of Life lies in their differing conceptions of the creative process. In his Preface to the Lyrical Ballads (1800) Wordsworth argues, on the basis of his own experience, that creation is not the "spontaneous overflow of powerful emotions"[17] in that actual moment in which those emotions are first experienced as a result of some immediate impression. It has its source rather "from emotion recollected in tranquillity".[18] The emotion itself is contemplated until, "by a species of reaction, the tranquillity gradually disappears, and an emotion, kindred to that which was before the subject of contemplation, is gradually produced, and does itself actually exist in the human mind."[19] Imagination, therefore, is closely linked to memory. The power of the poet lies in his ability to recall past emotions. It is impossible, for example, for the mature poet to experience the actual emotions of a child for the obvious reason that he is not a child. Yet, in watching a child at play, he is able to recall his own childhood joy and, in recalling it, bring forth an emotion kindred to that which the child experiences. Thus, in the "Intimations Ode", he concludes:

> Then sing, ye Birds, sing, sing a joyous song!
> And let the young Lambs bound
> As to the tabor's sound!
> We in thought will join your throng,
> Ye that pipe and ye that play,
> Ye that through your hearts to-day
> Feel the gladness of the May!
> What though the radiance which was once so bright

Be now for ever taken from my sight,
  Though nothing can bring back the hour
Of splendour in the grass, of glory in the flower;
  We will grieve not, rather find
  Strength in what remains behind;
  In the primal sympathy
  Which having been must ever be.
(169-183.)

Shelley, on the other hand, considered poetry as a species of revelation. The "celestial light" that envelops nature for the poet and accounts for "splendour in the grass" or "glory in the flower" is not an emotion "kindred" to that of the child; it is the actual vision of the child. And it is the actual vision because the poet in the act of creation stands in the same divine presence as does the child. The poet is not recalling the "radiance which was once so bright" which has been "for ever taken from my sight"; he is visited by that radiance. The vision of the poet is the inarticulate vision of the child. If, then, it be "forever taken from my sight" the poet is no longer able to create. If what Wordsworth says in the first half of his poem is true (namely, that "the things which I have seen I now can see no more") then, from Shelley's point of view, he has lost his imaginative power. And, if he has lost his imaginative power, reason and the senses cannot long preserve him from an inward disintegration. He could not, as a poet with his faith in the creative imagination, find comfort in Wordsworth's "philosophic mind." For a literalist of the imagination either Heaven or Hell was

preferable, as Shelley himself points out, to the kind of "purgatory" that, from Shelley's point of view, Wordsworth held out. As an apocalyptic poet, Shelley could only deal with extremities. With the loss of Paradise (" celestial light") Hell on earth was the only alternative. The poet, as poet, is divine; as a poet, Shelley could not bear to become what Wordsworth always knew himself to be, "a man speaking to men".[20]

Shelley's indebtedness, therefore, to Wordsworth's "Intimations Ode" belongs to the first eight stanzas in which he describes the loss of "celestial light", explaining it first in metaphysical terms derived from Plato's doctrine of pre-existence and then in psychological terms of the child's adjustment to his environment. As might be expected, it was the metaphysical explanation that primarily interested him. The parallels between the two poems must now be examined.

In the fifth stanza of the "Intimations Ode" Wordsworth writes:

> Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting:
> The Soul that rises with us, our life's Star,
> Hath had elsewhere its setting,
> And cometh from afar:
> Not in entire forgetfulness,
> And not in utter nakedness,
> But trailing clouds of glory do we come
> From God, who is our home:
> Heaven lies about us in our infancy!
> Shades of the prison-house begin to close
> Upon the growing Boy,
> But he beholds the light, and whence it flows,

He sees it in his joy;
The Youth, who daily farther from the east
Must travel, still is Nature's Priest,
And by the vision splendid
Is on his way attended;
At length the Man perceives it die away,
And fade into the light of common day.
(59-77.)

This stanza closely parallels Rousseau's account of his own experience in The Triumph of Life. His birth, he says, was an "oblivious spell" which yet could not entirely blot out from his mind the thought of the transfigured world from which he came. While waking to the dream of life, the traces of a diviner light still lingered:

"Though it was now broad day, a gentle trace
Of light diviner than the common sun
Sheds on the common earth, and all the place

"Was filled with magic sounds woven into one
Oblivious melody, confusing sense
Amid the gliding waves and shadows dun."
(337-342.)

The account of his travels that each day takes him farther from east, though still guided "by the vision splendid", Shelley presents in the form of a myth which embraces the psyche-epipsyche theme. Rousseau's "splendid vision" is described as a "Shape all light" which transfigured the earth about her. This shape is Iris, Rousseau's epipsyche. She is his own soul-state in the kingdom of pre-existence. Rousseau addresses her as one who "comest from the realm without a name/ Into this valley of perpetual dream."

The fading of the vision "into the light of common

day" is described in terms of Rousseau's drinking from a cup which she raises to his lips. His brain, he says, then

. . . became as sand

"Where the first wave had more than half erased
The track of deer on desert Labrador;
Whilst the wolf, from which they fled amazed,

"Leaves his stamp visibly upon the shore,
Until the second bursts....
(405-409.)

With the loss of those traces of a diviner light, which he compares to the setting of Lucifer, he sank into that other light which was to guide him to his doom.

"So knew I in that light's severe excess
The presence of that Shape which on the stream
Moved, as I moved along the wilderness,

"More dimly than a day-appearing dream,
The ghost of a forgotten form of sleep;
A light of heaven, whose half-extinguished beam

"Through the sick day in which we wake to weep,
Glimmers, for ever sought, for ever lost;
So did that shape its obscure tenour keep

"Beside my path, as silent as a ghost;
But the new Vision, and the cold bright car,
With solemn speed and stunning music, crost

"The forest, and as if from some dread war
Triumphantly returning, the loud million
Fiercely extolled the fortune of her star.
(424-438.)

Thus does Shelley describe the process that Wordsworth presents in the last two lines of his fifth stanza:

At length the Man perceives it die away,
And sink into the light of common day.

Rousseau's account of his own spiritual history provides the basis for an understanding of the first section of

the poem. The poem opens with a description of the sunrise. What Shelley describes, however, is not "the light of common day" but that light infused with "celestial light." The rising sun is "the birth/ Of light" (6-7) which is "swift as a spirit hastening to his task/ Of glory and of good" (1-2). At its rise "the Ocean's orison rose" (7), "the orient incense" of flowers sent "their odorous sighs up to the smiling air " (12-14), and "the birds tempered their matin lay" (8) to the "Ocean's orison". This is the "splendid vision" bestowed by the "Shape all light". But across this vision of nature there came, as a shadow, another vision. This second vision is the "light of common day" which gradually obliterates the "celestial light".

> And, weary with vain toil and faint for thirst,
> Heard not the fountains, whose melodious dew
>
> Out of their mossy cells forever burst;
> Nor felt the breeze which from the forest told
> Of grassy paths and wood-lawn interspersed,
>
> With over-arching elms and caverns cold,
> And violet banks where sweet dreams brood, but they
> Pursued their serious folly as of old.
> (66-73.)

Shelley is here describing the mass of humanity who have been utterly carried away by their "serious folly" to the point where they are no longer aware of the beauty that surrounds them. Shelley, however, is careful to distinguish the people in his vision from himself. In the very midst of this vision, he says:

I knew

That I had felt the freshness of that dawn
Bathe in the same cold dew my brow and hair,
And sate as thus upon that slope of lawn

Under the self-same tree, and heard as then

The birds, the fountains and the sea still hold
Sweet talk in music through the enamoured air.
(33-39.)

Shelley, in other words, has not joined the throng. What he is describing is a prophetic vision of what lies ahead for him, should he decide to continue, like Rousseau, until evening. "The Soul that rises with us, our life's Star," says Wordsworth, "hath had elsewhere its setting". While Lucifer's light, in Rousseau's account, is absorbed into the "chrysolite/ Of sunrise" (414-415), Shelley knew, that it hath had elsewhere its setting". It belongs, like the "soul of Adonais" (404), in "the abode where the Eternal are" (Adonais, 445). Shelley did not worship the earthly Aphrodite but her divine form, the heavenly Urania. Unlike the victims in his vision, he never confused the two. Adonis's love for Aphrodite, he transfigured into the yearning of the poet's soul for its divine epipsyche. It was Rousseau's failure to distinguish between Aphrodite and Uranis that led to his ruin:

"Before thy memory

"I feared, loved, hated, suffered, did and died,
And if the spark with which Heaven lit my spirit
Had been with purer nutriment supplied,

"Corruption would not now thus much inherit
Of what was once Rousseau, - nor this disguise
Stained that which ought to have disdained to wear it.
(194-205.)

And Plato suffered the same doom in his earthly life:

"All that is mortal of great Plato there
Expiates the joy and woe his master knew not;
The star that ruled his doom was far too fair.
(254-256.)

Some "sacred few", however, "who could not tame/ Their spirits to the conquerors", escaped this earthly doom. These were the martyrs who "as soon/ As they had touched the world with living flame/ Fled back like eagles to their native noon". Such a one Shelley imagined Keats to be and such a one he imagined, at the end of Adonais, himself to be. The Triumph of Life, therefore, must be understood in terms of the destiny that Shelley had already conceived for himself in Adonais. What he is describing in the vision is, on the one hand, his own awareness of his loss of "celestial light" and, on the other, what it would be like to live on in this world without it. The fact that most of humanity must indeed live on without that light filled Shelley with some horror. It is possible, however, to see in that horror a judgment upon the world that had rejected him just as it is possible to see in Dante's Inferno a judgment on his own enemies and in Milton's Paradise Lost a judgment on England for the failure of its people to fulfil Milton's expectations for them. Shelley was the prophet of the day

of Resurrection. Like all such prophets his vision carried a threat for those who rejected it. Shelley believed that he had come into the world to redeem it with his revelation of the divinity in man. The world rejected that vision and he went back to his proper abode leaving behind him a vision of the consequences.

The Bacchanalia which the poet sees in his vision in the opening section of the poem, then, is the perverted form of the true hieromania of the last act of Prometheus Unbound. Like Milton's presentation of Hell in Paradise Lost, it is a close parody of the Kingdom of Heaven.

The poem, as it stands, is but a fragment. Whether Shelley meant to move from his vision of Hell to a final vision of Paradise, whether, that is, he had in mind a poem on the scale of Dante's Divine Comedy presented in terms of the Platonic myth of the soul's descent into the world, its cycle of incarnation and its final return to "the abode where the Eternal are", it is impossible to say. Mary Shelley calls The Triumph of Life one of Shelley's most mystical poems. There can be no doubt that underlying it there is an anagogical vision which he realized only in negative terms.

When Shelley's poem is compared with Wordsworth's "Intimations Ode" it is not only evident that he rejected Wordsworth's view that recollection of early childhood is

adequate compensation for the loss of "celestial light", but also that he rejected the idea that the "years that bring a philosophic mind" is any adequate substitute for mystical union with the One. This latter fact is evident when Rousseau's account of his own spiritual history is examined in the light of the Platonic myth. And when the poem as it exists in fragmentary form is seen in the light of Plato's myth, rather than Wordsworth's poem, it is possible to detect a larger vision within the poem itself.

In the Phaedrus myth, Plato compares the tripartite soul to two winged horses driven by a Charioteer. The Chariots of the gods, he says, run smoothly within the firmament of Heaven because the divine charioteers have perfect control over their winged steeds. The gods, that is, live eternally in a state of perfect equilibrium because their faculties are harmoniously subordinated one to the other with reason in the driver's seat. This inner harmony of the three parts of the soul (the appetitive, the spirited and the rational) which the gods enjoy at all times is what, for Shelley, the poet enjoys in moments of divine inspiration. It is in this sense that Shelley says the poet, as distinct, from man, is divine. This inner hierarchy of the faculties of the soul he explored in the Epipsychidion.

Among men, however, the charioteer is seldom in control of his winged steeds and not until he is able to assume

perfect control over them is he fit to take his place "in the abode where the Eternal are." "The Chariots of the Gods," says Plato,

going evenly and being always obedient to the hand of the Charioteer, accomplish their journey easily; but the other Chariots hardly, with great labour, for the Horse which is by nature froward is as a weight, and ever inclineth towards the Earth, and, except the Charioteer hath brought him into subjection, draweth the Chariot down. Herein standeth the cause to the Soul of trouble and trial exceeding great and sore which are prepared for her. (247 B.)

While some men are able to imitate the life of the gods up to a point, they are so troubled by their horses that they are hardly able to behold the world of the Forms. The plight of others is even worse:

Besides these there follow other Souls which all do strive after that which is above, but are not able to reach unto it, and are carried round sunken beneath the face of Heaven, trampling upon one another, and running against one another, and pressing on for to outstrip one another, with mighty great sound of tumult and sweat of the race; and here, by reason of the unskilfulness of the Charioteers, many Souls are maimed, and many have their wings broken; and all, greatly travailing, depart uninitiated, not having seen That Which Is, and turn them to the food of Opinion. (248A-B.)

Shelley's account of the great mob in <u>The Triumph of Life</u>, while certainly influenced by Petrarch's <u>Trionfi</u>, derives ultimately from Plato. He first describes the appearance of the chariot which he compares to the "young moon" (79) in the midst of a gathering tempest. He then goes on to describe the charioteer and the dizzy course of his winged horses:

Upon the chariot-beam
A Janus-visaged Shadow did assume

The guidance of that wonder-winged team:
The shapes which drew it in thick lightnings
Were lost: - I heard alone on the air's soft stream

The music of their ever-moving wings.
All the four faces of that charioteer
Had their eyes banded; little profit brings

Speed in the van and blindness in the rear,
Nor then avail the beams that quench the sun
Or that with banded eyes could pierce the sphere

Of all that is, has been or will be done;
So ill was the car guided - but it passed
With solemn speed majestically on.
(93-106.)

Around this chariot the mob gathers, breaking into a wild dance until it finally passes over them and they collapse.

In A Defense of Poetry Shelley describes the perversion of Christ's teachings during the middle ages in the following manner:

But his doctrines seem to have been quickly distorted. At a certain period after the prevalence of doctrines founded upon those promulgated by him, the three forms into which Plato had distributed the faculties of mind underwent a sort of apotheosis, and became the object of the worship of Europe. Here it is to be confessed that "Light seems to thicken," and

The crow makes wing to the rooky wood,
Good things of day begin to droop and drowse,
And night's black agents to their preys do rouse.[21]

What emerged from this "apotheosis" was the "dust and blood of . . . fierce chaos".[22] The vision that Shelley presents is the chaos of the human faculties which results from the loss of man's creative power. The career of the chariot is the symbol, as in Plato, of that inner chaos.

In the Phaedrus, Plato further develops his myth

concerning the nature of the soul with reference to the psyche-epipsyche relationship. Every man, he says, makes a god of his beloved. The process through which his own psyche is united with its epipsyche is an initiation into the Mysteries, and if this union is realized on the highest level man has attained unto true knowledge. The initiation rites he then goes on to describe in terms of the charioteer and his two winged steeds. The account provides the Platonic basis upon which Shelley describes Rousseau's fate.

When the Charioteer beholds the vision of love, says Plato, the one winged horse who is obedient to the charioteer holds itself back from rushing forth to embrace the beloved. The other horse, however, forces the first horse to follow his lead and, try as he may, the charioteer at first cannot prevent him. As a result he is forced "to go unto the Beloved One and make mention of the sweetness of carnal love" (254). When, however, the Charioteer approached thus intimately and sees the glory that shines through his beloved, his "memory is straightway carried back unto the Form of the Eternal Beauty"(254B). He is, as a result, overcome with fear and reverence, and forces both his steeds down upon their haunches.

In this state the one horse, "by reason of his shame and panic, wetteth all the Soul with sweat" (254 C), while

the other "hardly recovering breath, in anger upbraideth, and heapeth curses upon, the Charioteer and his fellow horse" (254C). When this experience has been repeated many times, the lascivious steed is finally subdued so that the Charioteer is able to follow his beloved in reverence and fear. Finally, his steeds under perfect control, he enters into companionship with her. Thus Plato concludes:

> Wherefore, if then the better parts of the mind prevail, and lead the Soul into a constant way of life and true wisdom, then are men, all the days of their life here, blessed and at peace with themselves, having the mastery over themselves, doing all things in order, having brought into bondage that part of the Soul wherein wickedness was found, and having made that part free wherein virtue dwelleth; and after this life is ended, they rise up lightly on their wings, having gained the victory in the first of the three falls [i.e., the three cycles of incarnation] at the True Olympic Games, than which victory no greater good can the Temperance of Man or the Madness from God bestow on Man. (256 E.)

Rousseau, in explaining how it was that he was caught up in the chaos of the chariot's course, explains that he, like Plato's charioteer in his first vision of his beloved, could not subdue his own mortal passion; he had not supplied "the spark with which Heaven lit my spirit" with"purer nutriment" (201-202). In the presence of Iris, like the charioteer in Plato's myth, he was "as one between desire and shame/ Suspended" (394-395). Yet his passion was so far subdued that he could follow her with reverence and fear. But in following her, she was gradually lost

in the light which "the common sun/ Sheds on the common earth" (338-339). "I was overcome", he says,

By my own heart alone, which neither age,

"Nor tears, nor infamy, nor now the tomb
Could temper to its object."
(240-243.)

Underlying Plato's account of the soul's struggle in this world lies the larger Orphic vision of pre-existence. What the soul in this world is attempting to do is to find its way back to the world of the Forms. In the Orphic myth of Er in the Republic he describes how the soul, before descending into the prison-house of the flesh, must choose the kind of life which it wishes to live, is then given a guardian spirit to guide it, drinks from the river of Lethe (though if wise not too much) and descends into the world. The guardian spirit in Plato's myth is Rousseau's epipsyche, Iris. In losing her, he failed to temper his heart to its proper object. The world of his soul's pre-existence was lost before the onslaught of his own passions.

In his willingness to accept the loss of "celestial light" and be content with "intimations of immortality" in the years "that bring a philosophic mind" Wordsworth is far truer to Plato's philosophy than Shelley. Shelley's view of the creative imagination was such that he believed that the mind of God was itself the image of all other

minds. Plato, of course, is careful to distinguish in his myth in the Phaedrus between the minds of his gods and the minds of mortal men. For Shelley, the imagination was capable of fusing the human and the divine. He could not, as a poet, accept Plato's view of the life of reason. He could not, that is, live out, like Plato's philosophers, "all the days of his life here, blessed and at peace with himself ". And Plato recognized that poets by nature could not live in this manner; for that reason (among others) he excluded them from his ideal Republic. Wordsworth, on the other hand, he could probably admit because the Dionysian spark had been brought under the control of the "philosophic mind."

By 1822 Shelley could not play with shadows any longer. He had "awakened from the dream of life" (Adonais, 344). The thought that in those shadows were the intimations of the true objects that cast them could not console him. When the shade of Rousseau explains to him that the madding crowd consists of all those who were defeated in the battle of life, the poet replies:

> "Let them pass,"
> I cried, "the world and its mysterious doom
>
> "Is not so much more glorious than it was,
> That I desire to worship those who drew
> New figures on its false and fragile glass
>
> "As the old faded." - "Figures over new
> Rise on the bubble, paint them as you may
> We have but thrown, as those before us threw,

"Our shadows on it as it passed away.
(243-251.)

The Triumph of Life is an extremely complex vision. It combines the idealism of Plato with the despair of Goethe and Byron. The idealism of the poem, however, is implicit in the despair of the vision. Between the two poles Shelley moved throughout his life. In his Promethean days, his idealism was in the ascendant. In Adonais his hope merged with the object of his hope and silenced it. What was left was "the world and its mysterious doom". Looking back at Shelley's vision in the light of The Triumph of Life, one thinks of Emilia's dying words in Othello:

> What did thy song bode Lady?
> Hark, canst thou hear me? I will play the Swan
> And die in music.
>
> (V, ii, 249-251.)

CONCLUSION

As apocalyptic visions, both Queen Mab and The Revolt of Islam are failures. The weakness of Queen Mab lies in Shelley's inability to establish an organic relationship between himself, as poet, and the universe, as the material source upon which the poet imposes an imaginative form. Still under the influence of a mechanistic philosophy that assumes the existence of an external object world which is independent of the subject who perceives it, he could not finally affirm his mature conviction that the spirit in all objects which it views, views only its own creations. What is evident in the poem is a psychic struggle in Shelley to find the ultimate ground of all knowledge within himself. Implicit at least in the poem is the identification of the various forms of tyranny which he so heartily condemns with the mechanistic universe of D'Holbach and Helvetius which he describes. He had not yet arrived at the realization of his poetic maturity; namely, that the vision of a mechanistic universe at once fixed and immutable is simply the perspective of the fallen self. He had not yet worked out his own metaphysic.

In The Revolt of Islam, Shelley presents the temporary victory of the forces of evil over the forces of good, culminating in the death of Laon and Cythna and their entrance into a world where they enjoy an eternal bliss. What the poem actually reveals, however, is Shelley's inability to define the nature of evil and thereby deal with it. In the introductory canto, he presents the conflict of good and evil as a constantly renewed struggle between a serpent and an eagle. The limitations of Shelley's conception of this struggle can best be understood by comparing it to the struggle between Prometheus and Jupiter in Prometheus Unbound. In this later poem, Jupiter is the symbol of man's restricted consciousness, i.e., consciousness unredeemed by imagination. Jupiter is simply another form of Prometheus bound to a precipice; both are symbols of the arrested imagination. The wounded serpent which falls into the sea in The Revolt of Islam, therefore, is another form of the eagle. Both are symbols of the arrested imagination. Shelley is not yet sufficiently aware of the nature of his own developing vision, of his own psychic powers, to explore all the dimensions of his apocalypse.

In this respect, therefore, The Revolt of Islam roughly parallels Alastor, which deals with the poet's failure to create. The wounded serpent as a symbol of restricted creative power applies equally to this poem. And Pro-

metheus Unbound, which fulfils the unrealized potentiality inherent in The Revolt of Islam, stands in relation to this latter poem as the Epipsychidion stands in relation to Alastor.

Prometheus Unbound is the realized form of Shelley's apocalyptic vision. The imaginative fusion of the erotic and Promethean aspects of his vision is here achieved, where, in The Revolt of Islam, it had failed. And with this achievement behind him, Shelley was finally in a position to bring into focus the anagogical level of his vision. This focus he achieves in Adonais. Where previously the cycle of death and re-birth in nature becomes the analogue of the death and re-birth of humanity, now the death and re-birth of nature and humanity becomes the analogue of the soul's descent from the One and its return to the One. Having achieved this ultimate dimension of his thought, a dimension implicit throughout the entire course of the unfolding of his vision, Shelley's earthly task was finished. His last poem, The Triumph of Life, is a vision of the world which he has spiritually deserted, a world bound by the "curse" of "surrounding impressions."[1]

What, therefore, is evident in this study of Shelley's apocalyptic vision is the fact that Shelley's poetry, viewed as a whole, presents the gradual unfolding of a single vision. The source of that vision, as he himself states, lay within himself. What he was attempting to do

in his poetry was to construct the total image of himself through which he might come to know the nature of his own prototype. He was, in essence, acting upon the Socratic dictum, know thyself. As a metaphysical poet, however, Shelley would be the first to reject the notion that his whole career was governed by an egotistical impulse. In the revelation of his own nature, he sought to reveal the true nature of all men. Like all epic poets, he laboured in the smithy of his own soul in order to forge the uncreated conscience of his race.

In the composition of his poems Shelley was acting upon the categorical imperative of his own nature. No poet was ever more conscious of mankind's need of a redemptive vision or laboured more diligently, in the midst of appalling indifference, to answer that need. Viewed in terms of the public response to his poetry in his own day, he was forced to admit to failure. Shelley, however, realized that the general public of his own day was not fit to sit in judgment upon his poems. Within himself, he knew that he was writing in a tradition to which belonged all "the unacknowledged legislators of the world."[2] Like Socrates and Christ (as Shelley viewed them), he was the votary of Eros which, throughout the ages, had guided men in the world of becoming toward the world of Being. They were his compeers and his place among them was assured. He belonged to "the abode where the Eternal are" (Adonais, 495).

END-NOTES

All end-notes appear in abbreviated form; complete information is provided in the Bibliography. Where more than one work by an author is cited in any one chapter, a shortened form of the title appears; otherwise only the author's name is given.

In the first part of this study, quotations from Shelley's poems are followed by a line reference in the case of the longer poems where the reference may be obscure. In the second part, all quotations from the particular poem under examination are followed by a line reference.

NOTES ON INTRODUCTION

[1]Shelley, A Defense of Poetry, VII, 113.

[2]Shelley, On Love, VI, 202.

[3]Loc. cit.

[4]Shelley, A Defense of Poetry, VII, 137.

[5]Loc. cit.

[6]Loc. cit.

[7]Ibid., 116.

[8]Ibid., 109.

[9]Ibid., 113.

[10]Shelley, VII, 134.

[11]Loc. cit.

[12]Ibid., 137.

[13]Ibid., II, 72.

NOTES ON CHAPTER I

[1]Shelley, Preface to Prometheus Unbound, II, 174.

[2]Shelley, Letters, X, 21.

[3]Shelley, II, 175.

[4]Cf. Brailsford, Chaps VI and VIII.
If it were possible to blot out from our mind its memory of the Bible and Protestant theology, and with that mind of artificial vacancy to read Paradise Lost and Samson Agonistes, how strange and great and sad would the genius of Milton appear. We should wonder at his creative mythological imagination, but we should marvel past all comprehending at his conceptions of the divine order, and the destiny of man. To attempt to understand Shelley without the aid of Godwin is a task hardly more promising than it would be to read Milton without the Bible (212).

[5]Godwin, Political Justice, I, 400.

[6]Ibid., 404.

[7]Ibid., 447.

[8]Shelley, VII, 137.

[9]Godwin, I, 427 f. (italics not in original)

[10]Ibid., 426.

[11]Ibid., 430.

[12]Ibid., 423 f.

[13]Ibid., III, 8 f. (Introduction).

[14]Shelley, VIII, 301.

[15]Ibid., IX, 260.

[16]Godwin, "Of English Style", The Enquirer, 369.

[17] Ibid., 369.

[18] Loc. cit.

[19] Loc. cit.

[20] Ibid., 382 f.

[21] Ibid., 405.

[22] Ibid., 474.

[23] Shelley, A Defense of Poetry, VII, 138.

[24] Loc. cit.

[25] Shelley, VIII, 10.

[26] Ibid., 232 f.

[27] Ibid., 239-241 (January 10, 1812).

[28] Shelley, Preface to Prometheus Unbound, II, 174.

[29] Shelley, IX, 266.

[30] Ibid., VIII, 242.

[31] Ibid., 243.

[32] Ibid., 242-244.

[33] Godwin, Political Justice, III, 49f (Introduction).

[34] Shelley, VIII, 301.

[35] Ibid., 287 f.

[36] Quoted in Campbell, 107.

[37] Shelley, VIII, 301.

[38] Godwin, III, 109 (Introduction).

[39] Ibid., I, 405.

[40] Ibid., 407. [italics not in the original]

[41] Ibid., 427.

[42] Shelley, VII, 75 f.

[43]Godwin, III, 13 (Introduction).

[44]Shelley, VII, 75.

[45]*Loc. cit.*

[46]Godwin, 39.

[47]Shelley, I, 6.

[48]*cf.* Notropoulos, 137-139.

[49]Shelley, I, 153.

[50]*Ibid.*, VII, 161.

[51]*Loc. cit.*

[52]*Ibid.*, 162.

[53]*cf.* Polos.

[54]Shelley, I, 145.

[55]*Ibid.*, VII, 197 f.

[56]*Ibid.*, 238 f.

[57]*Ibid.*, X, 234.

[58]Shelley, VII, 135.

[59]*Ibid.*, 137.

[60]*Loc. cit.*

[61]Shelley, VII, 109.

[62]*Ibid.*, I, 144.

[63]Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*, 364.

[64]Shelley, VII, 137 f.

[65]A distinction, of course, must be made between Plato's view of Necessity and Godwin's. Godwin views Necessity in psychological terms as the immutable law of cause and effect. For Plato, Necessity is lawless. Shelley, however, equates the two views. The world of habitual recurrence is, he says, a chaos from the poet's point of view.

[66]Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*, 363.

[67]Shelley, A Defense of Poetry, VII, 140.

[68]Ibid., 132.

[69]Loc. cit.

[70]Loc. cit.

[71]Shelley, The Triumph of Life, IV, 171.

[72]Quoted in Campbell, 122.

[73]Shelley, VII, 134.

[74]Ibid., 124.

NOTES ON CHAPTER II

[1]Quoted in Campbell, 122.

[2]Shelley, A Defense of Poetry, VII, 137.

[3]Shelley, Letters, VII, 232 (January 3, 1812).

[4]Ibid., 133 f.

[5]Cassirer, The Myth of the State, 46.

[6]Ibid., 47.

[7]Shelley, A Defense of Poetry, VII, 134.

[8]Shelley, Letters, VIII, 187 (November 23, 1811).

[9]Ibid., VIII, 239.

[10]Loc. cit.

[11]Ibid., 240.

[12]Ibid., IX, 81 f.

[13]Quoted in Harrison, 369.

[14]Loc. cit.

[15]Nonnus, Dionysiaca.

[16]Euripides, Bacchae, 30.

[17]Shelley, Notes on Sculptures, VI, 329.

[18]Harrison, 473.

[19]Quoted in Harrison, 473.

[20]Guthrie, 40.

[21]Euripides, 11.

[22]Shelley, Notes on Sculptures, VI, 320.

[23]Quoted in Guthrie, 80.

[24]Ibid., 81.

[25] Ibid., 75.

[26] cf. Guthrie, 187.

[27] Ibid., 130.

[28] Shelley, A Defense of Poetry, VII, 121.

[29] Blake, Works, III, 177.

[30] Shelley, A Defense of Poetry, VII, 121.

[31] Nietzsche, The Birth of Tragedy, 1001.

[32] Ibid., 1002.

[33] Guthrie, 242.

[34] Cassirer, The Myth of the State, 79.

[35] Ibid., 229.

[36] To say that the Dionysian myth lies "behind" Wordsworth's account of childhood and the process of growing up means that the Dionysian myth provides the archetypal form of Shelley's account. The bond of unity between the Orphic myth of pre-existence and his description of childhood lies in the fact that both present a unique mode of perception: the state of participation mystique. Commenting upon the experience of childhood recounted in the poem, Wordsworth says:

> I was unable to think of external things as having external existence, and I communed with all that I saw as something not apart from, but inherent in, my own material nature. Many times while going to school have I grasped at a wall or a tree to recall myself from the abyss of idealism to the reality. At this time I was afraid of the process.

This "abyss of idealism" from which Wordsworth recalled himself becomes in maturity the experience of seeing "into the life of things." Shelley, however, far from recalling himself to the reality, sank ever deeper into the "abyss". Had Wordsworth followed a similar course, he might have arrived at an apocalyptic conception of poetry similar to Shelley's. Shelley plunged in where Wordsworth feared to tread.

[37] Shelley, A Defense of Poetry, VII, 107.

[38] Ibid., 111.

[39] *Ibid.*, 110.

[40] *Loc. cit.*

[41] Shelley, VI, 195 f.

[42] Shelley, *A Defense of Poetry*, 135.

[43] *Ibid.*, 139.

[44] *Ibid.*, 135.

[45] Shelley, Letters, X, 270 (June 5, 1821).

[46] Plato's point is that there are certain ultimate truths which it is beyond the power of human reason to demonstrate scientifically. Myth provides a way of explaining such truths, although, of course, the explanation is not literally true. This view of myth can be illustrated by what Plato has to say at the end of the Orphic myth in the *Phaedo* (114D):

> Now to maintain that these things are just as I have said would ill befit a man of common sense; but that either this or something similar is the truth about our souls and their dwelling-places, that (since the soul has been proved to be immortal) does seem to me to be fitting, and I think it is a risk worth taking for the man who thinks as we do.

[47] Shelley, VII, 135.

[48] Cassirer, *The Myth of the State*, 79.

NOTES ON CHAPTER III

1 Shelley, Notes on Queen Mab, I, 153 (footnote).

2 Quoted in Harrison, 483.

3 Harrison, 328.

4 Shelley, VII, 103.

5 cf. Harrison, 378 f.

6 Shelley, VII, 91.

7 Shelley, A Defense of Poetry, VII, 117.

8 Shelley, Essay on Christianity, VI, 242 f.

9 Ibid., 243.

10 Shelley, A Defense of Poetry, VII, 130.

11 Ibid., 131.

12 Ibid., 127.

13 Shelley, Essay on Christianity, VI, 231 f.

14 Shelley, Preface to Prometheus Unbound, II, 171 f.

15 Shelley, A Defense of Poetry, VII, 117.

16 Loc. cit.

17 Ibid., 134.

18 Loc. cit.

19 Shelley, Essay on Christianity, VI, 239.

20 Shelley, Essay on Christianity, VII, 104.

21 An account of the Dionysian myth which parallels, in certain respects, Shelley's Promethean interpretation may be found in Aristophanes, The Birds, which Shelley had read. In Aristophanes' comedy, the race of birds, having wrested from the gods the supreme power in heaven, are anxious to prove that the power which they now hold by force is really

theirs by ancient right. They therefore recite, to a submissive audience of mere human beings, a new version of the Orphic cosmogony, designed to show that the race of birds is of more ancient lineage than the gods. In turning Prometheus, the fire-stealer, into the Creator, thus destroying Jupiter, Shelley has performed a similar feat.

[22]Nietzsche, The Birth of Tragedy, 297 f.

[23]Shelley, Essay on Christianity, VI, 242.

[24]Shelley, A Defense of Poetry, VII, 127.

[25]Loc. cit.

[26]Willamowitz, Der Glaube der Hellenen, II, 199.

[27]Guthrie, 219.

[28]Shelley, VI, 243 f.

[29]Shelley, A Defense of Poetry, VII, 127.

[30]Ibid., 127 f.

[31]Grierson, 275.

[32]Lewis, The Allegory of Love, 20.

[33]Rougemont, 69.

[34]Shelley, A Defense of Poetry, VII, 129.

[35]cf. Nygren, Agape and Eros,

[36]Shelley, translation of Symposium, VII, 206-7.

[37]Nygren, Agape and Eros, 170.

[38]Rougemont, 56.

[39]cf. Guthrie, 164-70.

[40]Plato, Phaedrus, 246a-257a.

[41]cf. Nonnus, Dionysiaca.

[42]Guthrie, 88.

[43]Loc. cit.

[44]Quoted in Guthrie, 88.

[45]*Loc. cit.*

[46]Shelley, VI, 202.

[47]*Ibid.*, II, 174.

[48]*Ibid.*, VI, 75.

[49]Shelley, *A Defense of Poetry*, VII, 128.

[50]Shelley, VI, 193.

[51]Frye, *Explorations*, 87.

[52]Shelley, *On Love*, VI, 201 f.

NOTES ON CHAPTER IV

[1]Shelley, On Love, VI, 202.

[2]Shelley, A Defense of Poetry, VII, 137.

[3]Shelley, On Love, VI, 202.

[4]Loc. cit.

[5]Shelley, A Defense of Poetry, VII, 107.

[6]Ibid., 137.

[7]Loc. cit.

[8]Loc. cit.

[9]Notes on The Revolt of Islam, I, 409.

[10]Shelley, I, 153.

[11]Ibid., VII, 131.

[12]Ibid., I, 152.

[13]Shelley, A Defense of Poetry, VII, 129.

[14]Shelley, Letters, X, 33 (February 25, 1818).

[15]Shelley, VI, 250.

[16]Ibid., VII, 115.

[17]Shelley, Notes to Queen Mab, I, 148.

[18]Shelley, A Defense of Poetry, VII, 117.

[19]Shelley, VI, 231.

[20]Shelley, Notes on Queen Mab, I, 152.

[21]Ibid., 152 f.

[22]Ibid., 153.

[23]Willey, Seventeenth-Century Background, 31 f.

[24]Ibid., 29.

[25]Rand, 48.

[26]Ibid., 49.

[27]Loc. cit.

[28]Loc. cit.

[29]Ibid., 49 f.

[30]Quoted in Rogers, 228.

[31]Loc. cit.

[32]Whitehead, 77 f.

[33]Becker, 79.

[34]Quoted in Becker, 81.

[35]Becker, 80.

[36]Shelley, Notes to Queen Mab, I, 148.

[37]Shelley, On Life, VI, 194.

[38]Quoted in Willey, Nineteenth-Century Studies, 31.

[39]Willey, Seventeenth-Century Background, 33.

[40]Shelley, A Defense of Poetry, VII, 131.

[41]Ibid., 129.

[42]Ibid., 128.

[43]Loc. cit.

[44]Loc. cit.

[45]Loc. cit.

[46]Ibid., 129.

[47]Loc. cit.

[48]Ibid., 130.

[49]Ibid., 140.

NOTES ON CHAPTER V

[1]Shelley, A Defense of Poetry, VII, 135.

[2]Ibid., 137.

[3]Shelley, VIII, 213.

[4]Shelley, Letters, VIII, 238.

[5]Quoted in Campbell, 107.

[6]Godwin, Political Justice, I, 400.

[7]Shelley, IX, 11.

[8]Shelley, A Defense of Poetry, VII, 111.

[9]Ibid., 109.

[10]Godwin, III, 13 (Introduction).

[11]Shelley, IX, 11.

[12]Godwin, Political Justice, I, 427. (italics not in original.)

[13]Godwin, "Of the Study of the Classics", The Enquirer.

> The science of thinking therefore is little else than the science of words. He that has not been accustomed to refine upon words, and discriminate their shades of meaning will think and reason after a very inaccurate and slovenly manner. He that is not able to call his idea by various names, borrowed from various languages, will scarcely be able to conceive his idea in a way precise, clear and unconfused (47).

[14]Shelley, IX, 13.

[15]Shelley, A Defense of Poetry, VII, 117.

[16]Loc. cit.

[17]Baker, 23.

[18]Ibid., 24 f.

[19]Shelley, VII, 135 f.

[20] D'Holbach, II, 352.

[21] Quoted in Cassirer, The Philosophy of the Enlightenment, 71.

[22] Shelley, VIII, 33.

[23] cf. Cassirer, 72.

[24] Quoted in Cassirer, 73.

[25] cf. Cassirer, 71 f.

[26] Shelley, A Defense of Poetry, VII , 137.

[27] Shelley, I, 144.

[28] Shelley, A Defense of Poetry, VII, 137.

[29] Shelley, On Life, VI, 194.

[30] Shelley, A Defense of Poetry, VII, 137.

[31] Loc. cit.

[32] Shelley, Hymn to Intellectual Beauty, II, 59.

[33] Shelley, A Defense of Poetry, VII, 137.

[34] Ibid., VII, 135.

[35] Shelley, Adonais, II, 495. The anagogical level of Shelley's vision is brought into focus in Adonais, although it is implicit in Queen Mab.

[36] Shelley, VII, 136.

[37] Darwin, I, iii.

[38] Darwin's effort to enlist the imagination in the service of science is sanctioned in advance by Bacon in his notion of "poesy parabolical" as one kind. Queen Mab may be described, in part, as an example of "poesy parabolical", i.e., a poem which employs the imagination to render the truths of science pleasing.

[39] Ibid., III, Preface, n.p.

[40] Ibid., 12.

[41] Shelley, X, 371.

NOTES ON CHAPTER VI

[1]Shelley, I, 239.

[2]Loc. cit.

[3]Ibid., 240.

[4]Ibid., 243 f.

[5]Ibid., 409.

[6]Shelley, Preface to The Revolt of Islam, I, 239.

[7]Ibid., 239.

[8]Ibid., 245.

[9]Loc. cit.

[10]Shelley, II, 174.

[11]Shelley, I, 245.

[12]Shelley, IX, 266 f. (December 11, 1817).

[13]Peacock, Memoirs of Shelley, 29 f.

[14]Ibid., 30 ff.

[15]Newton, "Hindoo Zodiac" Monthly Review, 108.

[16]Ibid., 109.

[17]Peacock, 32.

[18]Newton, 109.

[19]Loc. cit.

[20]Loc. cit.

[21]Peacock acknowledges his source in a footnote to the second stanza of the first Canto of Abrimines. cf. Peacock, Poems and Plays, VII, 423.

[22]Peacock, Abrimines, VII, 267.

[23]Shelley, Preface to The Revolt of Islam, I, 239.

[24]Ibid., 243.

[25]Ibid., 241 f.

[26]Shelley, VII, 103.

[27]Loc. cit.

[28]Ibid., 104.

[29]Shelley, A Defense of Poetry, VII, 137.

[30]Shelley, I, xii (Preface to collected edition, 1839).

[31]Loc. cit.

[32]Loc. cit.

[33]Shelley, Letters, IX, 250 (October 13, 1817).

[34]Shelley, Preface to The Revolt of Islam, I, 239.

[35]Loc. cit.

[36]Shelley, VII, 115.

[37]Shelley, IX, 250.

[38]Ibid., 251.

[39]Baker, Shelley's Major Poems, 83.

[40]Shelley, II, 174 f.

[41]Milton, Paradise Lost, VII, 31.

NOTES ON CHAPTER VII

[1]Shelley, Preface to The Revolt of Islam, I, 243.

[2]Peacock, Poems and Plays, VII, 428 f.

[3]Shelley, I, xii (Mary Shelley's Preface to the Collected Poems, 1839).

[4]Shelley, VII, 109.

[5]Shelley, II, 172.

[6]Ibid., 270.

[7]Ibid., VII, 113.

[8]Ibid., IX, 266 (December 11, 1817).

[9]Shelley, A Defense of Poetry, VII, 137.

[10]Loc. cit.

[11]For an account of the Orphic creation myth cf. Chapter II, 61-63.

[12]Shelley, Preface to Prometheus Unbound, VI, 171.

[13]Milton, Paradise Lost, I, 3.

[14]Shelley, A Defense of Poetry, VII, 129.

[15]Ibid., 117.

[16]Ibid., 129.

[17]Loc. cit.

[18]Ibid., 136.

[19]Ibid., 109.

[20]Loc. cit.

[21]Ibid., 110.

[22]Loc. cit.

[23]Cf. Timaeus, 29B-C:

Concerning a likeness, then, and its model we must make a distinction: an account is of the same order as the

things which it sets forth - an account of that which is abiding and stable and discoverable by the aid of reason will itself be abiding and unchangeable. . . while an account of what is made in the image of that other, but is only a likeness, will itself be but likely, standing to accounts of the former kind in a proportion: as reality is to becoming, as truth is to belief.

[24]Shelley, VII, 118.

[25]Loc. cit.

[26]Ibid., 137.

[27]Shelley, I, 145 (Note on Necessity).

[28]Loc. cit.

[29]Ibid., VII, 111.

[30]Ibid., II, 269 (Note on Prometheus Unbound).

[31]Shelley, A Defense of Poetry, VII, 135.

[32]Shelley, VI, 241.

[33]Ibid., VII, 136 f.

[34]Ibid., 137.

[35]Ibid., 112.

[36]Loc. cit.

[37]Loc. cit.

[38]Ibid., 113.

[39]Loc. cit.

[40]Loc. cit.

[41]Ibid., 137.

[42]Loc. cit.

[43]Loc. cit.

[44]Ibid., 136.

[45]Ibid., 137.

[46]*Loc. cit.*

[47]Shelley, VII, 238.

[48]*Ibid.*, 228.

[49]*Loc. cit.*

[50]*Ibid.*, 112.

[51]*Ibid.*, 127.

[52]*Loc. cit.*

[53]*Ibid.*, 138.

[54]*Ibid.*, 129.

[55]*Ibid.*, 139.

[56]*Ibid.*, 135.

[57]*Loc. cit.*

[58]*Ibid.*, 139.

[59]*Ibid.*, 140.

NOTES ON CHAPTER VIII

[1]Shelley, A Defense of Poetry, VII, 129.

[2]Ibid., 137.

[3]Ibid., 128.

[4]Loc. cit.

[5]Loc. cit.

[6]Shelley, VI, 202.

[7]Preface to Collected Poems (1839), I, xii.

[8]Shelley, Preface to Prometheus Unbound, II, 174.

[9]Shelley, VIII, 103 f.

[10]Note on Prometheus Unbound, II, 268.

[11]Loc. cit.

[12]Shelley, Letters, X, 48 (April 6, 1819).

[13]Shelley, I, 145.

[14]Loc. cit.

[15]Ibid., 173.

[16]Loc. cit.

[17]Loc. cit.

[18]Loc. cit.

[19]Note on The Revolt of Islam, I, 409.

[20]Shelley, Preface to Alastor, I, 173.

[21]Shelley, A Defense of Poetry, VII, 135.

[22]Shelley, II, 353.

[23]Shelley, X, 333.

[24]Ibid., 236.

[25] *Ibid.*, VII, 228.

[26] *Ibid.*, 228 f.

[27] Shelley, Preface to *Alastor*, 173.

[28] Note on *Alastor*, I, 198.

[29] Shelley, I, 244.

[30] *Ibid.*, VII, 137.

[31] *Ibid.*, 123.

[32] *Ibid.*, 124.

[33] *Ibid.*, 122.

[34] Shelley, *Letters* X, 401 (June 18, 1822).

[35] *Ibid.*, VII, 228.

[36] *Ibid.*, 109.

[37] Shelley, X, 246 (March, 1821).

[38] *Ibid.*, I, 173.

[39] *Ibid.*, X, 232.

[40] Shelley, *A Defense of Poetry*, VII, 137.

[41] *Loc. cit.*

[42] *Ibid.*, 113.

[43] *Ibid.*, 139.

[44] Shelley, *On Love*, VI, 202.

NOTES ON CHAPTER IX

[1] Shelley, Letters, X, 275 (June 11, 1821).

[2] Shelley, VII, 123.

[3] Ibid., 124.

[4] Ibid., 123.

[5] Ibid., 124.

[6] cf. Frazer, Adonis, Attis, Osiris, 3-216.

[7] Shelley, A Defense of Poetry, VII, 137.

[8] Ibid., 136.

[9] Shelley has in mind Keats's Hyperion. Writing to Ollier (June 8, 1821), he says:

> You may announce for publication a poem entitled "Adonais." It is a lament on the death of poor Keats, with some interposed stabs at the assassins of his peace and of his fame; and will be preceded by a criticism of "Hyperion," asserting the due claims which that fragment gives him to the rank which I have assigned him.

[10] Shelley, VII, 135.

[11] Ibid., 137.

[12] Loc. cit.

[13] Ibid., II, 174. (Preface to Prometheus Unbound).

[14] Shelley, Ode To The West Wind, II, 70.

[15] Shelley, Preface to Hellas, III, 8.

[16] Ibid., 7.

[17] Ibid., X, 333.

[18] Note on the Poems of 1820, IV, 78.

[19] Loc. cit.

[20] Loc. cit.

[21]Shelley, Preface to The Cenci, II, 71.

[22]Shelley, A Defense of Poetry, VII, 137.

[23]Shelley, Letters, X, 331 (October 21, 1821).

[24]Note on the Poems of 1820, IV, 79.

[25]Shelley, Letters, X, 331 (October 21, 1821).

[26]Ibid., 232.

[27]Shelley, A Defense of Poetry, VII, 116.

[28]Ibid., 137.

[29]Shelley, Letters, X, 270 (June 5, 1821).

[30]Gilbert, 202 f.

[31]Shelley, VII, 127.

[32]Loc. cit.

[33]His head was bound with pansies overblown,
And faded violets, white, and pied, and blue;
And a light spear topped with a cypress cane,
Round whose rude shaft dark ivy-tresses grew
Yet dripping with the forest's noon-day dew.
(289-293.)

[34]Shelley, Preface to The Cenci, 71.

[35]Ibid., 72.

[36]Shelley, X, 218. (November, 1820). Mary Shelley has written on the original - "This letter I believe was never sent."

[37]Ibid., 80.

[38]Ibid., 194.

[39]Ibid., 254.

[40]Shelley, A Defense of Poetry, VII, 131.

NOTES ON CHAPTER X

[1] Shelley, VII, 134.

[2] Ibid., 132.

[3] Loc. cit.

[4] Ibid., 140.

[5] Ibid., VIII, 236.

[6] Ibid., III, 120.

[7] Ibid., IX, 315.

[8] Ibid., X, 370 f.

[9] Shelley, A Defense of Poetry, VII, 137.

[10] Shelley, Letters, X, 354 (January 26, 1822).

[11] Shelley first read "Cain" with Byron before it was published in 1821. He writes to Peacock (January 11, 1822):

> Of course you have seen his last volume, and if you before thought him a great Poet, what is your opinion now that you have read Cain? The Foscari and Sardanapalus I have not seen, but as they are in the style of his later writings, I doubt not they are very fine.

Earlier in the letter, he says:

> Lord Byron is established now at Pisa , and we are constant companions; no small relief this after the dreary solitude of the understanding and imagination in which we past [sic] the first years of our expatriation, yoked to all sorts of miseries and discomforts.

Doubtlessly, Shelley's constant companionship with Byron intensified the mood of despair in 1822.

[12] Ibid., X, 354 (January 26, 1822).

[13] Shelley, A Defense of Poetry, VII, 140.

[14] Shelley, X, 405.

[15] Ibid., 411 .

[16] Ibid., 411 f.

[17] The Creative Process, 84.

[18] *Loc. cit.*

[19] *Loc. cit.*

[20] *Ibid.*, 83.

[21] Shelley, VII, 126.

[22] *Loc. cit.*

NOTES ON CONCLUSION

[1] Shelley, *A Defense of Poetry*, VII, 137.

[2] *Ibid.*, 140.

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